



Black Swan:
Intriguing, Strong
And Tipped For
An Academy
Award. Page 17.



The Strategic
Plan: In-Depth
Analysis
And Opinion.
Pages 12 & 13.

AMBITIOUS

UNIVERSITY LAUNCHES STRATEGIC PLAN

Written by **Darragh Roche**,
Deputy Editor

UL PRESIDENT, Professor Don Barry has launched the University's "Pioneering and Connected" Strategic Plan 2011-15. Prof Barry unveiled the plan at the Kemmy Business School on Tuesday, Week 1. The plan sets out four goals that the University hopes to achieve within the next five years.

These goals are: providing an outstanding student experience, enhancing the University's research profile, improving the University's European and international focus and increasing its contribution to the economic and social life of the Shannon Region and the nation.

The plan says that the University's mission is to be distinctive, pioneering and connective. It details the University's increased focus on broadening participation, the social and cultural role of universities and the importance of the European and international dimension.

"UL started out with a vision of pioneering and excellence," Prof Barry said. "Now more than ever this vision rings true. We have a lot to be proud of in this University. We are all bound together in this University."

Prof Barry emphasised the role of student centred education and praised what he called the UL spirit exhibited by the UL community. "There is a uniquely strong esprit de corps among our staff," he said. "This is our own UL identity." "Some of these are pretty tough targets. There are tensions between the targets, tensions we will have to resolve together in the coming years," Prof Barry said. "Tensions in a strategic plan aren't a bad thing. It makes the plan alive."

Prof Barry discussed the need to have a clear alignment between research and teaching, as the plan places a large emphasis on improving the quality of research and the number of citations

of UL publications. "Our work must be shaped by the work of international research communities," he said. "We value and support the research of all members of the campus community," he added.

The President discussed the need to co-operate with other educational institutions and pointed to the presence of the President of IT Tralee and Registrar of NUI Galway at the event. "We are Ireland's greatest collaborators," Prof Barry said.

"Given that the Govt is short of a few bob at the moment, it is absolutely imperative that we see new and sustainable sources of revenue," the President said. The Chancellor of the University, Peter Malone, the Mayor of Clare and the Leas-Cathaoirleach of Limerick County Council also attended the launch.



UL President, Professor Don Barry speaking in the KBS at the launch of the Strategic Plan on 25 January 2011.

ROAD SAFETY WEEK

DRIVE SAFELY, ARRIVE ALIVE

Lifesaver project. Thursday, Week 3.
12:30pm at the Plaza.



GOVERNMENT MAY CREATE SINGLE GRANTING AUTHORITY

Written by **Darragh Roche**,
Deputy Editor

LOCAL councils and VECs may lose the power to administer higher education grants. The Student Support Bill was approved by the Oireachtas before the dissolution of the 30th Dáil. The Bill allows for the removal of higher education grants from the remit of local authorities and also simplifies the system by paving the way for a single student grant to replace the current four.

There are currently 66 granting authorities, many of which have not yet issued grants to eligible students. The Government estimates 40% of students applied for financial assistance this academic year, though many have

yet to receive any money or even confirmation that they will receive it.

The economic downturn coupled with the rise in the student service charge has placed students under greater financial strain and increased the number of grant applications. Granting authorities have blamed the large number of applications they have to process for the slowness of payments this year.

The new system for administering grants has not yet been decided but the proposed changes include removing higher education institutions from the grant process. Grant applications might be submitted with the CAO form in future. In such a scenario, Student

Academic Administration (SAA) would merely have to acknowledge that the applicant is a registered student for the grant to be approved. It is also proposed that all grants be paid electronically and directly into students' bank accounts.

"We're pleased that the Bill is passed," SU Welfare Officer, Derek Daly said. "Anything that improves the student grant system is to be welcomed."

State agencies will be allowed to bid for the contract to administer any new, simplified grant system.

News

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Thanks to everybody who contributed to this issue.



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1. Contributors please note:
All submissions to An Focal are greatly valued. If you have submitted an article which has not been published in this issue, it is very likely that your piece has been retained for publication in future issues. If you are concerned that your article has not been published, please say so.

2. Editing:
If you are unhappy with how your article appeared in An Focal, please discuss this with the Editor. A number of strict guidelines are followed in the production of An Focal, which means some articles may be altered to allow them to fit on the page and to improve readability.

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EDITORIAL



Finn McDuffie, Editor

BRACE YOURSELVES.
HERE WE GO AGAIN.

THE game is on. Here comes the charade. Here come the posters, the photo shoots and plenty of plastic handshakes (or if you're Enda Kenny, paw shakes).

This is a time where we can all sit back on our sofas and enjoy the tantalisingly pathetic efforts of our probable future Taoiseach, as he parades about the country leaving a sea of empty rhetoric and Golden Doodles in his wake. Naturally, the whole thing will be a bit kitsch. From the convoys

of black Mercedes, to the contrived and ridiculously transparent photo opportunities, it's going to leave quite a lot of us wishing we didn't actually have a vote.

Apparently, candidates have been asked to pare back their jargon because it's driving us potty. What a great idea! The trouble now is, what on earth will they say?

And then there's the empty promises caressed by a customary swathe of buzzwords. The key ones this time round are "change" and "jobs" and "renegotiation". But I don't buy them. Nor do I buy the opinion polls. They might be colourful.

They might come in a nice two page spread every two to three days. But they won't take up an iota of my time, because they're tedious, they probably don't mean all that much and I try to avoid smell of fresh newsprint anyway.

What about those televised debates? How much are we looking forward to those? They won't be good, but by God, they ought to be entertaining. And if they're not, then I'll just pull out some old DVDs of Yes Minister. I'll get the same bullshit, but at least I can pretend it's not actually happening to us.



Six pillows, three duels and a half dozen onlookers at the Week 1, flash mob pillow fight, which took place in the SU Courtyard on 27 January 2011.
Image: Finn McDuffie

FEATHERS FLY IN FLASH PILLOWFIGHT

Written by **Sinéad Ní Chatháin**

STUDENTS held a pillow fight flash mob in the SU Courtyard on Thursday, Week 1.

Organised by the administrators of a Facebook profile entitled "Limerick Pillow Fight Flash Mob", the event hoped to "bring a bit of craic" in what the group described as 'turbulent

times'. The flash mob began a few minutes before 1pm, on 27 January 2011. Students suddenly produced pillows from bags, rucksacks and jackets and began a pillow fight. The fight began in one large group at first, before breaking away into smaller groups around the courtyard.

It is estimated around 30 people took part in the fighting, with three times as many looking on. Nearly 1400 people had confirmed attendance at the event on Facebook. Photographers from the SU, the University and the local press turned up. Photos and videos were posted on the Facebook page,

alongside comments which praised the group for its efforts. The event was not connected with the SU and was organised independently.

FIRST MEDICAL STUDENTS GRADUATE

Written by **Evana Downes**

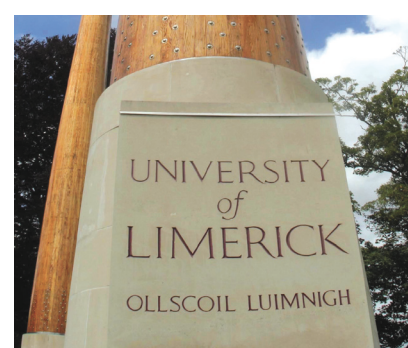
THE first graduates of the Graduate Medical School were conferred with their degrees during the Winter Conferring Ceremonies in early January.

The first graduate of the school was Dr Francis O'Neill, who was conferred with a Masters of Surgery. Already a qualified doctor, he plans to continue his training through the Higher Surgical

Training Scheme. Having undertaken orthopaedic medical research at the Mid-Western regional Orthopaedic hospital in Croom under the supervision of Drs Michael Walsh and Finbarr Condon, Dr O'Neill has stated that he hopes to become an Orthopaedic Surgeon.

It was a momentous occasion for the Graduate Medical School, which was established in 2007 and has since been

headed by Professor Paul Finucane. The establishment of the University of Limerick's Graduate Medical School in 2007 is described by the UL Strategic Plan 2011-2015 as "the catalyst [which will help] to develop a significant medical research programme" in the university. The first cohort of undergraduate medical students will graduate in August 2011.



CLARIFICATION

A by-line which credited Victoria White as the writer of the An Focal article "What ever happened to the Irish mammy?" was incorrect and should have credited Ms. Amy Grimes. The article appeared on page 18 of issue eight, which published on 25 January 2011.

DALAI LAMA WILL VISIT UNIVERSITY

Written by **Darragh Roche**,
Deputy Editor

HIS Holiness the Dalai Lama will visit UL this semester as part of a visit to Ireland in support of several charities, with which he is associated. The Dalai Lama will address University staff and students and local dignitaries in the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance (IWA) on 14 April.

Children in Crossfire, an Irish Charity, and two non-profit organisations, Spunout.ie and Afri are organising the event together. The director of Children in Crossfire, Richard Moore, is a long-time friend of the Dalai Lama. His charity is committed to creating a world where all children can have access to human

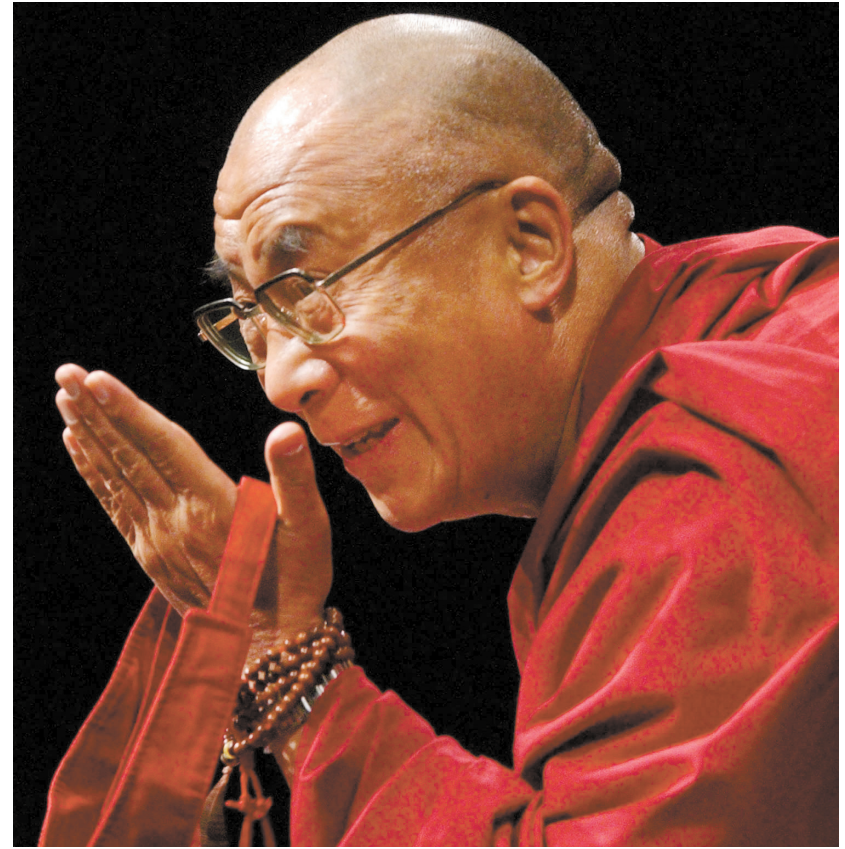
rights and an opportunity to develop their full potential. His Holiness will speak on the topic 'the Power of Forgiveness' and there will be musical performances from students of the IWA and the Irish Chamber Orchestra as well as local primary and secondary school children who are involved in the 'Music as an Instrument of Social Change' programme.

Tibetan Buddhists believe the Dalai Lama is the fourteenth re-incarnation of the Bodhisattva (enlightened being) of Compassion. The Dalai Lama was forced to flee Tibet for India in 1959 following the Chinese invasion and has been in exile ever since. He was

awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1989 and has been an outspoken critic of the People's Republic of China for decades.

The Dalai Lama is noted for his charismatic speeches and sometimes controversial views on a range of subjects, both social and political. Tickets for the event cost €25 and those interested must register at

www.ul.ie/dalailama



The Dalai Lama, who will visit UL on 14 April

BUSES ARE BACK AFTER VANDALISM DEBACLE

Undercover Gardai Expected To Make Arrests

Written by **Colm Fitzgerald**,
News Editor

BUS Éireann has resumed its post 10pm services to and from the University, after temporary cancellation in the last fortnight.

It is understood a decision to shut down the services was taken after heightened antisocial behaviour and vandalism to vehicles on the late night services both last Semester and during Week 1.

The buses ceased to operate after 10pm on Thursday, Week 1 and Tuesday, Week 2.

The company normally operates six scheduled services between 10pm and 11:30pm to the City Centre. The buses are often used almost exclusively by students going to town for a night out. Alcohol has been cited as a key factor in the antisocial behaviour. It is alleged individuals caused malicious

damage to some buses. Gardai were unable to use the CCTV on the vehicle to identify the individuals because they had covered the cameras.

Plain-clothed Gardai will be on the evening services and have said they expect to make arrests under the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act, 1994. The Gardai have already occasionally had to escort offending passengers from buses.

Bus Éireann has indicated Limerick sees the largest amount of damage to buses outside of Dublin, with repairs in 2009 costing more than of €500,000.

The euro bus used to operate a late night service, but this has also been cancelled due to similar behaviour in previous years.

RELIGION TOO PROMINENT ON MARY I PROGRAMME

Written by **Kelly O'Brien**

A RECENT report claims that trainee primary teachers studying in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick spend too much time studying religion.

Mary I, one of Ireland's largest teacher training colleges, reportedly allocates four times as many hours for religion than for science.

The report, issued by the Irish Teaching Council, also found that the trainee primary teachers are suffering from programme overload. It stated that the intensity was such that many students lacked sufficient time to "critically reflect on their professional development and practise." It also noted that this overload was equally significant from a staff point of view.

While the report welcomed the fact that student teachers have access to the Certificate in Religious Education on an optional basis, it was concerned at the amount of time allocated to religious education within the Bachelor of Education programme.

With more than 90 per cent of Irish primary schools remaining Catholic-managed, the report is almost

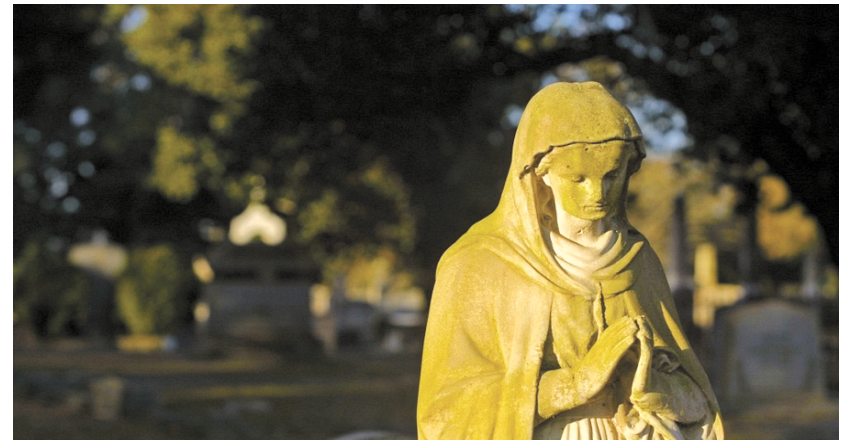
guaranteed to revive controversy regarding the huge influence of the Catholic Church in teacher training.

It even went so far as to recommend that the college authorities address some "inconsistency in the balance of time allocated to various programme components".

The review, completed by a panel of senior educationalists, criticised Mary Immaculate on a number of fronts such as programme overload

and overemphasis on Religion but did, however, go on to praise the college for the excellent work ethic of its staff.

It stated that the college retained a positive ethos and atmosphere and that the inspectors, chaired by Dr. Maeve Martin, former lecturer in education at NUI Maynooth, received overwhelmingly positive feedback from recent graduates, principals and external examiners.



The late Dr Gordon Holmesthe doyen of the mid west capital's legal eagles

UL REGRETS PASSING OF DR GORDON HOLMES

Written by **Aoife Coughlan**

IT is with great regret that UL mourns the passing of Dr Gordon Holmes.

Dr Holmes was what Business Limerick termed "the doyen of the mid west capital's legal eagles", graduating from UCD with a BCL and qualifying as a solicitor from the Law Society in Dublin.

He started practice in 1960 in Limerick City, going on to play an instrumental role in the development of Limerick city and most importantly the Development of UL.

Dr Holmes held the positions of Chairman of the Garda Síochána Complaints Board and Chairman of the Commission on Intoxicating Liquor Licensing as well as many

other high profile appointments throughout his life. He was also the first appointed State solicitor for Limerick city.

His connection with UL began in the 1980s when he supported its bid for university status.

Dr Holmes continued his support by becoming the founding director of the UL Foundation and assisted in fundraising for the provision of the Kemmy Business School and Glucksman Library.

The Holmes O'Malley Sexton Endowed Scholarship is another of his legacies to the University.

In acknowledgment of this support and involvement Dr Holmes was

awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from the University in 2005.

Speaking on the passing of Dr Holmes, UL President Professor Don Barry professed that he will be "a great loss to UL and to Limerick city".

Dr Holmes is survived by his wife Hilary and their four children.

News

SU LAUNCHES CHARITY WEEK 2010/11

Written by **Darragh Roche**,
Deputy Editor

THE SU officially launched Charity Week at a reception in the University President's house of residence near Cappavilla. Prof Don Barry's wife, Anna Ryan, hosted the event.

This year's chosen charities are Console/1Life, the Alzheimer Society of Ireland, the Mid-Western Cancer Foundation and the First Tee. Representatives from Console/1Life and the Alzheimer Society attended the launch and gave a brief description of the work and history of their charities.

The SU also launched the Charity Week clothing range. Charity Week t-shirts are on sale at the SU reception for €9.00 and €3.50 from each t-shirt goes towards charity.

Fifteen students attended the launch at the invitation of Welfare Officer, Derek Daly. Campaigns and Services Officer, Vivion Grisewood and Communications Officer, Finn McDuffie also donned the green, fundraising t-shirts. The SU wishes to thank Ms Anna Ryan for her kindness and remarkable hospitality. Ms Ryan provided a warm and welcoming atmosphere for the event and had tea and coffee ready for the visiting students.

Charity Week is in Week 6 (28 February to 4 March) and all students are encouraged to take part in fundraising events around campus for the worthy causes that have been chosen.



Students and Charities team up for Charity Week Launch

UL GRADUATES ARE THE MOST EMPLOYABLE

Written by **Colm Fitzgerald**,
News Editor

GRADUATES of UL remain the most employable according to recent statistics.

The news came as 1,632 students were conferred with their degrees during the January Graduations this year. UL currently boasts the highest completion rates in Ireland, however employment rates are 8% above the national average.

UL President, Professor Don Barry encouraged students to remain positive upon finishing college despite facing into an uncertain economy.

"Major graduate employers deliberately target UL graduates because of their combination of intellectual abilities, personal qualities and relevant work experience. So you are well armed for the challenges that lie ahead and I know that you will tackle them with confidence and with professionalism", he said. UL

Chancellor, Peter Malone echoed these sentiments. "Graduates, do not expect doors to fly open and opportunities to welcome you with both arms.

You have to earn that right - more today than any time in our history", he said. Integrity, honest and hard work should be written on every university degree and you should take the meaning of these three words to each and every challenge ahead of you", concluded Mr Malone. 328 students graduated from the Kemmy Business School, including 115 who took part in the academic partnership with The Revenue Commissioners as part of the Applied Taxation Programme.

Professor Barry encouraged these students to play their part in rebuilding Ireland's economy.

"A challenge you face will be to create a new and better business world. I encourage you to accept this

responsibility and do your utmost to ensure that the mistakes of the past stay right there-in the past".

47 PhDs were awarded during the conferring.

According to the Careers Office, "UL graduates have always competed better than average on the graduate employment market, partly because they already have work experience and also because they have a strong focus on finding employment. This positive attitude impresses employers when they come on campus to participate in recruitment events, especially the annual UL Careers Fair."

FOURTH EDITION OF SOCIOLOGY JOURNAL LAUNCHED

Written by **Evana Downes**

THE fourth edition of 'Socheolas', the Limerick Student Journal of Sociology has been launched by the Department of Sociology, headed by Dr Eoin Devereux. Speaking at the launch on Thursday, Week 1, UL President Professor Don Barry commended the peer-reviewed journal for its "engagement with and exploration of the complex issues present in contemporary society".

He also applauded Socheolas for encouraging students to identify with Sociology as a discipline and promoting the concept of an apprenticeship style of learning. In this way students are inducted into the profession of academic writing in a supportive and constructive environment. Abstract work submitted by students for the journal is edited and rewritten in a process similar to that which would occur in an international journal. Editor of the journal, Dr Patricia Neville, believes the journal

is an important resource and reference point for students studying Sociology, particularly first years facing the daunting task of writing their first sociology essay. "Socheolas is the only initiative of its kind in place that allows students to showcase the great work done for writing assignments, FYPs, etc. Each article is about three to four thousand words in length, and has been submitted by students who have achieved a B2 or greater on their work through the normal grading process," she said. Publishing articles in the journal brings numerous benefits for student contributors, their peers and academic staff members. Each of the twenty five contributors to the four issues can include their work in applications for postgraduate work funding, and their achievement can be listed on a CV. The Journal is available online at www.ul.ie/sociology.

STUDENT WINS GOLD IN EUROPEAN CROSS COUNTRY

Written by **James Crowe**

UL STUDENT, Michael Mulhare (Third Year Wood Science and Technology) and his team-mates on the under 23s Cross Country Team recently took the gold medal in the 17th Spar European Cross Country Championships in Albufeira, Portugal.

The team of six ran their hearts out to win team gold in the under 23s race.

The team's performance was the first gold medal in international cross country since Catherina McKiernan's individual gold medal winning performance back in the inaugural European Cross Country in Durham in 1994. "It was an incredible feeling

to win gold," Mr Mulhare said. "To stand on top of the podium, watching the Irish flag wave while I sang the national anthem was surreal, to say the least. Those moments are the reason I get up and run 100 miles a week," he added.

When asked about how it felt to appear on the Late Late Show, Mr Mulhare said: "It was amazing, a great experience to be on it. It's a pity they could only slot us on for such little time but like I said it was a great experience to meet a few well known people like Ryan himself, Mary Byrne, The Rubber Bandits, Galvin and so on. We actually got chatting to the Script

and they were bang on, gave us free passes into their concert that night in the Olympia where we had a great night. Appearing on the show itself was exciting and nearly more nerve wrecking than the race".

Mr Mulhare may soon compete at the World Cross Country Championships in Spain, if Ireland decides to send a team in March and then the under 23s 5000m championships in the Czech Republic in July.



Opinion



Berlusconi in Parliament

BERLUSCONI'S ANTICS AND UNSHOCKABLE ROME

LEGEND says the ancient Greeks invented sex. The ancient Romans saw promise in the idea, and introduced it to women. Its rise in popularity was phenomenal. Though the truth of this story is questionable, it is not unreasonable to claim that the Romans invented debauchery.

Written by **Darragh Roche**,
Deputy Editor

No nation in history has counted among its rulers so many lechers, deviants and reprobates as the Roman Empire. Today's Romans, then, have no cause to feel scandalised by the lurid behaviour of their prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi.

While in Ireland Bumbling Brian has been brought low by an ill-timed golf game, Italy's leader is clinging to power despite claims that he paid for underage prostitutes and routinely hosts wild parties with scores of beautiful, scantily clad young women. These orgiastic soirées are known as "bunga bunga" parties.

Berlusconi's reputation for debauchery is impressive. The 74-year-old's much younger wife recently divorced him, complaining that he spends too much time with women who are as young as his own children and that he has even attended 18th birthday parties for certain attractive young women. The most recent revelations involve a 17-year-old Moroccan nightclub dancer

named Ruby, who denies having sex with him, but who was certainly paid for something. "It's absurd to even think that I would pay to have sex with a woman," he has said, "I would consider it degrading." He means it would be degrading for him. This is the man who once denied paying for prostitutes because the thrill of the conquest is half the fun and who famously quipped that he could do worse than chase skirts, after all, he could be gay. It's sometimes as if he's trying to cause as much outrage as possible.

No-one buys the picture Berlusconi is painting. The Italian people are expected to see him as an amorous jack-the-lad type, whose virility and leadership skills go hand in hand. Most nations know what it is like to be ruled by an ego (Cowen again) but only Italy knows what it's like to be ruled by a libido. And Berlusconi's libido is of Caligulan proportions.

But perhaps there's something to admire about this man. The international

press, the opposition, the Vatican, his wife, his closest political ally and the influential Economist magazine all seem determined to ruin him. But he is still Italy's leader. The women with whom he is alleged to have been "improper" are really quite attractive. So is his ex-wife. The man can't be faulted on taste. He is also Italy's most successful politician, longest serving prime minister since Mussolini and a billionaire.

So, at 74, Silvio Berlusconi lives a lifestyle that most men would struggle to replicate at 24, and one that almost any man would jump through flaming hoops to attain. Berlusconi is no Roman emperor, but he has an imperial sense of his own destiny. The maelstrom of Italian politics will be poorer when it finally loses the Great Survivor, but at least the women of Rome will be safer.

'YES WE CAN' WON'T CUT IT

Written by **Paula-Jane Murphy**

OTTO von Bismarck once said, 'politics is the art of the possible'. In the current climate it is easy to overlook what is possible; economic catastrophes have a way of highlighting the impossible, the futile. An air of hopelessness seems to have settled among voters as we approach a general election.

No party has fully realised the extent of reform needed in the system. We do not care to hear our country's potential leaders apportion blame, name call and whine about injustice. Watching men and women scramble to scavenge on the publicity surrounding the latest casualty of political Pac Man leaves us not only disenchanted, but angry.

They say Nero fiddled while Rome burned and anyone who has seen The Oireachtas Report lately will have witnessed a house full of Neros,

an orchestra of fiddlers with smoke curling under the doors. There is only one way to fix this and that is to vote. Vote so you have your say. Vote so someone hears. Vote for the person with reforming policy. Do not ask the canvasser to fill your potholes and keep your local hospital open, as a voter you need to be nothing less than altruistic. Vote in the national interest. The key to a successful political system is a balanced and strong opposition and, as the Government has failed so too has the rest of the house. The main opposition parties are now flourishing not because of what they offer but because of who they are not. We, the people, are again guilty of being reactionary.

We need change and we need to vote for it, but that does not mean a dash to install an extreme left or a half hearted anointing of a badly led right.

The change we make needs to be all inclusive. To allow our anger to elect a new government with only weak opposition and a bare centrist presence is to set our country up to fall further out of the people's control. Just as we need new ideas we need someone to shout stop when the ideas become baseless and too radical. Listen not to the rhetoric but to the policy from all parties in the coming weeks and demand fresh thinking from those who approach your door. Vote, and make your vote an informed one. Bismarck knew with politics anything was possible; we now need to believe this and become the artists.



OPENING HOURS CAMPUS RESTAURANTS AND BARS

Valid Spring Semester 2011

Starbucks Main Building
Monday – Thursday: 8.15am – 6.00pm
Friday: 8.15am – 4.30pm

Subway Main Building
Monday – Thursday: 8.30am – 7.00pm
Friday: 8.30am – 3.00pm

Red Raisins Main Building
Monday – Thursday: 9.00am – 5.00pm
Friday: 9.00am – 4.00pm

Eden Restaurant Main Building
Monday – Thursday: 9.00am – 8.30pm
Friday: 9.00am – 4.00pm

Cube Café Kemmy Business School
Monday – Thursday: 8.30am – 8.30pm
Friday: 9.00am – 3.00pm

Café Verdi Health Sciences Building
Monday – Friday: 8.30am – 4.00pm
Friday: 8.30am – 3.00pm

Café Allegro Foundation Building
Monday to Friday: 9.00am – 4.30pm
Friday: 9.00am – 3.30pm

Café Sportif Old Sports Building
Monday – Friday: 9.00am – 4.00pm
Friday: 9.00am – 3.00pm

Café Aroma CSIS Building
Monday – Friday: 8.30am – 4.00pm
Friday: 8.30am – 3.00pm

River Café Millstream Courtyard
Monday – Friday: 8.30am – 4.00pm
Friday: 8.30am – 3.30pm

Millstream Restaurant
Millstream Courtyard
Monday – Friday: 12.00pm – 2.30pm

Common Room Millstream Courtyard
Monday – Friday: 10.00am – 12.00pm

Stables Club Student Centre
Monday – Thursday: 8.00am – 7.00pm
(Bar from 12.00pm – 11.30pm)

Friday: 8.00am – 7.00pm
(Bar from 12.00pm – 12.30pm)

Saturday: 9.00am – 5.00pm
(Bar from 12.00pm – 12.30pm)

Sunday: 6.00pm – 11.30pm
(Food and Bar)

Music/Events every night, view posters/promotions in The Stables Club

Paddock Restaurant Student Centre
Monday – Thursday: 8.00am – 7.00pm
Friday: 8.00am – 5.00pm
Available for functions on request.

Scholars Club Student Centre
Monday – Friday: 9.00am – 9.30pm
(Bar until 11.30pm)

Wednesday: Trad.
Night 9.30pm – 11.30pm

Alternating Tuesday
(Weeks 2, 4, ...): Hermitage Green
Band 9.30pm – 11.30pm

Friday: Complimentary finger food
7.00pm – 9.00pm

View posters/promotions in The Scholars Club.

Arena Sports Club University Arena
Monday – Thursday: 8.30am – 7.00pm
(Bar until 10.00pm)

Friday – Sunday: 8.30am – 6.00pm
Available for functions on request.

Plaza Café Glucksman Library
Monday – Friday: 8.00am – 5.00pm
(until 4 February 2011)

From 7 February 2011
Monday – Thursday: 8.00am – 8.30pm
Friday: 8.00am – 5.00pm

Blas Café IWA Building
Monday – Friday: 8.00am – 5.00pm

University Club Plassey House
Monday – Friday: 9.00am – 5.00pm
Coffee: 10.00am – 11.30am
Lunch: 12.00pm – 3.00pm

*Opening hours are subject to change

Features

ANDY GRAY AND RICHARD KEYS: IS ANYONE SURPRISED?

Written by **Róisín Peddle**

MALE soccer commentators are sexist. Is anyone surprised? Soccer has never been known as the most enlightened sport. Sepp Blatter, a man of prehistoric views and the president of FIFA, once advised women soccer players to wear tighter shorts if they wanted increased media coverage. In the 1990s, the first, and so far the only, openly gay professional footballer, Justin Fashanu, hung himself after being made an outcast in the game. When the Nottingham Forest manager Brian Clough found out Fashanu was gay, he wouldn't even let him train with the other players. This was less than twenty years ago and if the fact that no footballers have come out since is anything to go by, not much has changed.

Indeed nothing has changed since the days of Mad Men for Andy Gray and Richard Keys, now ex (in the case of Gray) Sky Sports pundits. Apparently "the game's gone mad" now that women are getting

involved. Forget about Robbie Keane earning £65,000 a week for sitting on the bench, women officials are the real problem with the Premier League. Keys and Gray, like complete clichés, then went on to question Sian Massey's knowledge of the offside rule. I would like to stress that this was before any ball was kicked. If Massey dropped a clanger, you might be able to understand where Keys and Gray were coming from, but they were ridiculing her before the game started. And has anyone ever sat either gentleman down and explained to them how exactly their microphones work?

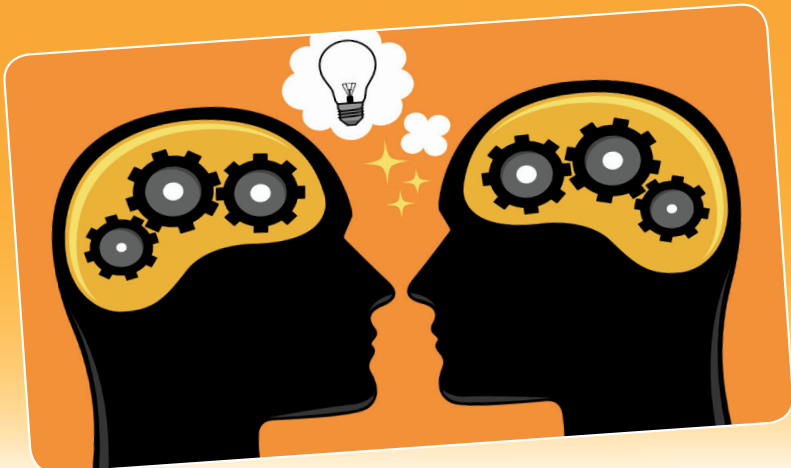
It could be argued Andy Gray and Richard Keys are relics of a bygone age. My mother, growing up in London in the 60s and 70s, was soccer mad, and would regularly go see Spurs at home. Yet she wasn't allowed played soccer in school. It just wasn't for girls. I'm part of a generation that was expected to

play sports, notably GAA. Once the local hurling team stopped to watch us train and remarks were made; our trainer, a man, ripped them to shreds. Keys and Gray are of a similar vintage as my mother; in their day, sexism was open and rampant. Today it's still there, but frowned upon. Or else it's an ironic pastiche, just as I assume all those "women making sandwiches" groups on Facebook are supposed to be.

Soccer, in Britain especially, has done an admirable job in reducing racism and hooliganism. Will this controversy ensure that sexism is kicked out of the game too? After all, in 2011 we have surely moved beyond the tired notion that our gender informs all our characteristics. Plenty of men don't like sport; plenty of women do. Sian Massey, one of those women, did an excellent job on the line and hopefully she'll have many more games to come.



Andy Gray and Richard Keys.



HEAD TO HEAD SHOULD SCHOOLS SAY SLÁN TO IRISH?

If you would like a topic discussed here, please email sucommunications@ul.ie

Written by **Karen O'Connor Desmond**

YES!

THE Irish language is a weird and wonderful thing. For years it has been a subject of much controversy within both our educational system and nation. Although Irish is officially our native tongue, we are essentially an English speaking country. Many people feel it is vital to preserve the language of our ancestors while others grimace at the thought of it. There are those who pride themselves on being fluent Irish speakers and those who simply do not see the point in hanging onto a dead language. We Irish are strongly divided over the matter and there is no better place that this debate can be seen than in our schools.

From the tender age of four or five, our gullible minds are exposed to the rules and regulations of speaking "as

gaeilge". We are expected to be fluent speakers of the language by the time we are eight or nine, if not younger. The compulsory subject is advertised as being an essential part of every young Irish persons schooling. If we fail to grasp our native language quickly and sufficiently we are met by teachers who cannot understand how after several years of learning Irish, one still cannot speak it. It is unacceptable to be able to speak English and not be able to speak Irish. As those of us who struggle with the language are so kindly reminded, Ireland's great heroes fought for our culture and language so we must not belittle their bravery.

So the question remains, should Irish be banned as a taught subject in schools? Although many students feel that learning Irish is a complete waste of one's time, some want to hold onto their culture and heritage. There are still areas in Ireland where Irish is spoken as the mother tongue

by a minority of people. But Irish might as well be a foreign language to the majority of natives. In fact, the only reason so many people are able to speak the language at all is due to its obligatory nature in schools. So while Irish should not necessarily be abolished as a compulsory subject in schools, it may be a good idea to make it an optional subject instead.

If Irish were taught as an optional subject in schools, the attraction of learning the language may see a revival. There should also be the same approach taken to teaching Irish as is done with other foreign languages. The basics should be taught carefully and no assumptions made about the extent of our knowledge on the subject. Irish may be our "native language" but for most of us there is nothing native about it.

Written by **Sinéad Ní Chatháin**

NO!

I COULD begin this opinion piece with a lecture on the importance of Irish in our culture and heritage and how vital it is to keep our traditions alive in today's society. I could tell you how the Irish language is a fundamental part of our history and the how loss of our native tongue would be catastrophic in our bid to preserve our Celtic culture. But saying all of this is useless, because most Irish people nowadays have heard that speech a thousand times.

We all know about the predicament our native language is in today, and why it is essential that we try to preserve it. We know how difficult it is to learn, how terrifying it is to speak it in an exam, and how impossible it seems as a language that was

once our mother tongue. I am not going to tell you all this again.

Instead, I will get straight to the point about what I think should be done regarding Irish in our schools. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that something needs to change. I am not a teacher, nor am I a politician; therefore my opinions may be flawed. However, I believe that one simple change in the Irish language education system could change the way teenagers think about Irish in the future.

My solution is simple: split up the Irish course into two subjects: one oral, one literary. A language is learned twice as fast through intense immersion into the language and the nation that speaks it. Anyone who has been to the Gaeltacht knows that. With Irish, our options for complete immersion are dwindling fast. Therefore, a completely oral Irish subject in secondary school seems to me the next best thing to Gaeltacht immersion. Just think what six years of speaking Irish

everyday would do to your language skills. For those who wish to learn what is already being taught to teenagers across the country, such as that dreaded filíocht and próis, as well as stair na Gaeilge, the literary Irish subject would be the other option. In this way, students who are interested in this section of the course can take the subject and do well in it. By separating Irish into two completely different subjects, students can learn only what they are interested in and hopefully change their opinions on the language.

In order for us to preserve our native tongue we need to give students what they want and what they need: a choice. Irish needs to stay in our schools, that much is obvious. But making Irish more accessible to those who will be preserving it after us is vital. My only hope is that soon, someone will see sense in our education system and change things before it's too late. Gaeilge Abú!

Features

A SEMESTER IN UL, IN ENGLAND

Written by **Darragh Casey**

A BACHELOR of Business Studies, when abbreviated, is sometimes interpreted as a different Bachelor of B.S than the one we see on our transcript. Indeed, it certainly isn't a very strenuous degree with respect to teaching hours (15-18), when relative to the hours Construction or Architecture students have to deal with. Attendance isn't very critical either, considering that personal attendance in lectures isn't checked accordingly and the tutorial attendance requisite is a very achievable 7/10 if applied at all.

And what's the big deal if you don't make a consistent effort to attain the prescribed hours? No problem, get the lecture notes on-line. You still have to study the external readings and practise the problem sets to achieve the best degree but there are 24 hours in the day and no more than 30 hours of application in a week to attend to.

Having quietly extended my co-operative placement in the UK from September 2010 to January 2011 and having also maintained my enrolment in UL, where do I stand?

The bottom line is that although I was being treated like any other full-time Business student in the Autumn semester past (a fourth year), I was working a full-time role with a Fortune 500 company in England; and did so by exceeding the QCA I acquired in Autumn 2009.

I undermined the credentials of a BBS in doing what I did. I travelled back to UL on an occasional basis by taking a day off from work here and there or by working from Ireland. I submitted the infrequent project work required and greeted the lecturers casually.

My actions epitomise the lack of substance within a particular undergraduate study. For a person to be in a different country to the third level institution that he or she should be attending at that time indicates weakness in that person's degree programme. There is a moral to this story. Re-introduce tuition fees, re-think the curriculum, stop grade inflation, and strive for an educational system of excellence.



Hops: ready for tea.

OLD IRISH REMEDIES: SOME TRUTH IN THE MYTHS

Written by **Aoife Finnerty**

ONCE upon a time, we probably all become aware of the existence of old Irish cures or remedies. I learned about them years ago in Primary School and despite being a martyr to cynicism aged 11, I wondered if there was any truth in them. From curing a toothache by rubbing the tooth of dead horse on one's jaw to purifying one's blood by drinking boiled down carrot juice, the whole thing fascinated me. And although I found it genuinely strange that people believed these myths, I figured there has to be some basis to them, hasn't there?

Take the cure for earache, for example. Place the wool of a black sheep in one's ear until the ache has gone. Nowadays, any web search of "how to treat earache" will advise plugging the ear loosely with cotton wool after pouring warm liquid such as oil into the ear. Given the absence of cotton wool in olden times, the wool of a sheep would have had to suffice. In addition, the wool would have caused the ear to heat up, which is recognised nowadays as being effective in easing an earache. Why a black sheep? Well, I have no idea.

Ok fine, that's just one remedy with a bit of basis, you say to yourself. How about the old remedy to cure a cold? Boil together hazel-buds, dandelion, chickweed, wood sorrel and oatmeal,

and drink the mixture morning and evening. Before you say it, I know, you can't cure a cold. Colds tire themselves out in about a week. We do talk a lot of about treating colds and more specifically the symptoms of a cold. So will this remedy do what it says on the tin? Dandelion has very high quantities of Vitamin C. Chickweed contains Zinc and Selenium, minerals commonly associated with boosting the immune system. Wood sorrel is a diuretic, which is in-keeping with modern cold treatment advice to keep hydrated and urinate frequently and a refrigerant, which means it cools any temperature symptomatic of a cold or flu. Like Chickweed, Oatmeal contains Selenium. It also contains Vitamin A (good for white blood cell count) and Vitamin B6, which assists the body in fighting infection. And hazel buds contain Vitamin E, which aids the immune system and Vitamin C.

Finally, although not a remedy as such, the Irish idea that taking a drink is good for nerves may have more basis in medicine than one would have thought. Beer contains hops. But long before hops were used in beer, the Irish boiled the flowers to make tea. Today, hops are used to treat anxiety, restlessness, and insomnia. So there's some more truth in the myth.

THE SOCIAL CANON

Written by **Amy Grimes**

I'M not a religious person. So it's rare that I read anything coming from the Vatican. It's also rare for something the Pope says to be in any way relevant to me. After all this is the man who, in a recently published book of interviews called "Light of the World: The Pope, the Church and the Signs of the Times," said that in certain cases, such as the prevention of HIV, the use of condoms is acceptable. Be warned though, they're not a "moral solution". Baby steps, I suppose. Now, it seems, he's spreading the word that social networking can be used positively.

On 24 January, Pope Benedict XVI released a letter with the title Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age in anticipation of The Catholic Church's 45th World Day of Communications, which occurs on 5 June. The message contains what he believes to be both the positives and negatives of online communication.

While social networking sites can lead to the sharing of positive ideas and international friendships, he says "It is important always to remember that virtual contact cannot and must not take the place of direct human contact with people at every level of our lives". A bit convoluted perhaps, but true nonetheless.

We live in an age where Flickr has replaced photo albums and the Kindle, for those who can afford it, takes the place of a nice paperback. Everything is online, from lecture notes to political campaigns, and email has all but obliterated the art of letter writing for everyone except the Pope. If I chose to, I could easily avoid human contact; I could get my lecture notes online or listen to a podcast. I could shop for absolutely anything and have it delivered to my door. If I felt like updating my friends on my progress, there's Facebook or Twitter. And I

could text my parents so they don't worry. Entertainment would be easy, and I'd never have to deal with pesky small talk again.

My example of hermitage seems a bit much until you consider most of us do all of the above. Pope Benedict has pointed out that if we are constantly available online we can become less present to those around us. The ease with which we can catch up with anyone, almost anywhere, is invaluable. But it is important that we don't neglect those closer to home. I'm not suggesting we follow the Pope's example, the man doesn't even have a Facebook for God's sake, but we should avoid becoming too caught up in the convenience of online interactions. If we distance ourselves too much, we could start to miss that pesky small talk.



Pope Benedict: Thinking about Social Networking

Travel

CHRISTMAS IN THE CARIBBEAN



The Caribbean is home to sea turtles, soaring eagle rays and myriad fish.

Written by **Leah O'Brien Bernini**

JUST like many of my classmates, Christmas break provides the only opportunity for my family to be together. So what better way to maximize family time than to gather us up, ship us off to some obscure island off the grid and trap us there for two weeks?

My parents first had the idea back in 2004. Trading in our presents for plane tickets, eggnog for rum punch and Santa hats for swimming togs, we waved goodbye to the snow and created new traditions in the sand. Sounding better? During my university and postgraduate years, our Christmas family vacations have been vibrant, warm vignettes filled with sun and family.

This year, we flew to Grand Cayman in the Caribbean, the largest of the three Cayman Islands (though it is still only 30km long). Primarily a scuba diving and luxury resort destination, the British territory is also powerful financial centre due to its tax-exempt status. We stayed at an eco-friendly dive resort our first week. Daily boat excursions with underwater tour guides brought us face-to-face with friendly sea turtles, soaring eagle rays, and myriad fish.

The unique underwater geography is comprised of sudden, striking walls (the Cayman Trench drops vertically 7,686m) and intricate mazes taller than apartment blocks and more complex than the London underground. Red, yellow and green corals plaster every surface; giant purple sea fans sway in the gentle current. Arguably the world's best underwater visibility and thousands of colorful reef fish complete the dizzying 360-degree experience. On Christmas Eve we drove to Rum Point;

the only place on the island where you can see both the sunset and sunrise from the same beach chair. From there, a dive boat brought us to Stingray City. This shallow sand bar is home to dozens of "docile" southern stingrays, many over a meter in diameter. Once in the water, the massive rays quickly mobbed our group, soaring over, around, under, and between us. Completely fearless, they followed our stray hands hoping for squid. When a resident cataract-ridden moray joined us for lunch, a right melee ensued.

The following week we moved to the busy side of the island. Luckily, we missed the cruise ship crowds due to the holiday and windy weather. We explored the artisan Seven Fathoms rum distillery in the capital of George Town, sampled local cuisine, and enjoyed the popular Seven Mile beach (though its only 6 1/2, but who's counting?). On our last dive, we witnessed two porcupine fish (pufferfish) engaged in a courtship dance that can last up to an hour; the male pursues the female, dancing in a small circle until she feels ready. She then releases her eggs into the water, which he then fertilizes. Our family may be scattered around the globe the rest of the year, but two weeks together on a small tropical island never fails to truly unite us again. And did I mention the rum?

STUDY ABROAD IN NEWFOUNDLAND

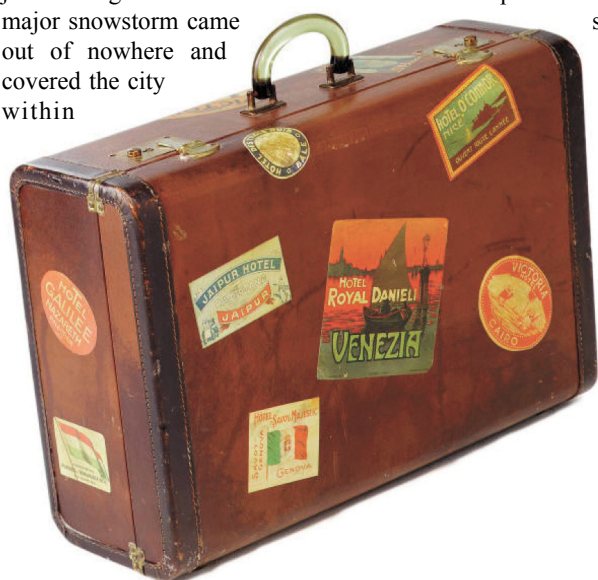
Written by **Jason Kennedy**

REMEMBER how a little bit of snow and ice brought Dublin to a standstill a few months ago? If that much snow landed in Newfoundland, people would still be out in shorts and t-shirts. When it comes to weather, these people are some of the toughest I've ever seen.

In my first few days here, the weather was fine. There was no snow, no ice and certainly no wind. This was surprising, because one month before I left Ireland, Newfoundland was hit by a major hurricane. The hurricane closed down the campus for a few days, but nothing that these hardy Newfies couldn't shrug off. However, it was the winter season they were dreading, and winter is only just starting here. The first major snowstorm came out of nowhere and covered the city within

minutes. The snow easily engulfed my feet and, in parts, nearly reached my knees. I learned very fast to use the university's underground tunnels. But I can deal with the major snow. It's still a novelty to me and makes the city look stunning. What I hate is the icy snow. You see, when heavy amounts of snow gets trampled on, rained on and then frozen, it turns into this evil, horrible, slippery substance. I've fallen over multiple times on it and it doesn't cushion a fall like fresh snow does.

The wind here is also the strongest I've ever felt. It's like walking straight into a tornado. The only benefit to it is how nice it is to listen to when wrapped up in bed. Trying to get to class in strong winds, and -24 degrees chill does not make a particularly enjoyable experience. It's all something I have to get used to. The winter season isn't over here by a long shot. Global warming, pah!



CO-OP IN CLARE

Written by **Keira Maher**

A FEW days ago, two of my friends jetted off to the west coast of Ghana to teach English. In a few weeks time, more friends will head off to Spain, Japan, Argentina and Cuba. And where am I off to? Good old Ennis; the capital town of Clare. It doesn't sound as exotic as Ghana but it was as far and as close to home as I was willing to go.

In Ennis I will work for the Banner Housing Association. This association works with the Brothers of Charity by providing houses for people with learning disabilities in Ennis. Needless to say, I didn't know what to expect.

When I arrived at Ennis bus station, my supervisor was nice enough to come and meet me. She took me around Ennis where I got to see some of the houses that they provided.

It was nice to meet people involved in the association but I was scared to death as to what exactly I was going to do. After a nice lunch in the centre of the town, I learned my fate for the next few months. I was apparently going to be in charge of the health and safety aspect of the association as well as being assigned general administration duties.

The first day was very overwhelming what with all the new people I had to meet, not to mention the fact that this was a whole new town I had to get used to. It was scary and exciting at the same time. The company was very helpful in that they were willing to put me up for the sixth months. As good as it sounds; they were some downfalls to this. First,

there was no internet in the house. And like many others, I just can't function without Facebook. The second downfall was that I would be living on my own. On my own without Facebook, I didn't know what to do. Luckily enough, Limerick is only down the road. As I start my six month placement, I am going to miss the college life, the parties

and the general messing about. But I'm looking forward to the new skills I'm going to learn and the people I'm going to meet. For now that's my lot, I'll be checking in soon again. Hopefully I'll be down some night for a party.



Lifestyle

ARE WE A GENERATION OF HAPPINESS JUNKIES?

HOW much time do you spend thinking about how much happier you would be if only you had more? If you had more money, nicer clothes, a better QCA? Is contentment something which you dismiss, in the hope of finding happiness which in turn is going to create a perfect life?

Written by **Lynda O'Donoghue**

Let's be honest, contentment doesn't sound very sexy or fun. In the face of happiness it doesn't seem enough to satisfy our post Celtic tiger needs and wants. But one has to wonder have we really become a nation of happiness chasing junkies? Everywhere we turn we are faced with self help books, articles and DVDs on how to become thinner, more successful, and get better college results. Walk into your local bookstore and you will see the word happiness jumping at you from every shelf.

In this self-obsessed generation, happiness has been transformed into a materialized possession. In a generation where absolute happiness is everything, we seem to be willing to do anything to achieve it. We will go on diets, travel the world and end relationships, all in the hope of achieving this "happiness".

Could it be true that the optimum happiness that we strive to achieve does not actually exist? One of the reasons

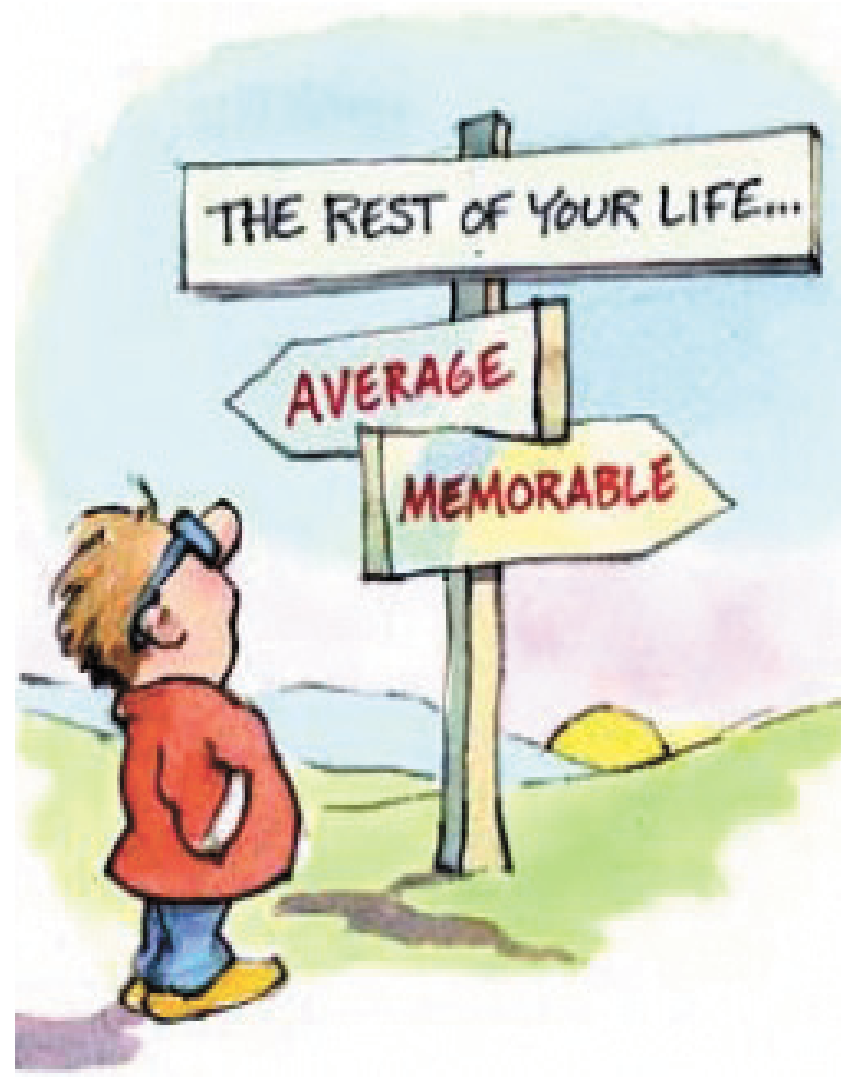
for this seems to be materialism. For example, the message on most advertisements on television these days is basically "You're not happy unless you buy this". Every aspect of life seems to encourage us to seek this ultimately unrealistic happiness. In the face of the recent economic gloom, contentment might be worth more than we think. Stressing out about the latest must haves in the hope of achieving happiness never did us any good and it didn't help us find happiness either.

The definition of contentment is a state of being contented, satisfaction and ease of mind. Does this not sound good to you? Maybe if we lowered our expectations and were content with our lives the way they are now, we would be happier. By no means am I saying to give up on your dreams and ambitions, however. Humans, by their very nature, strive to achieve perfection. We must not give up on this but instead realise that it never stops. Our ambitions

will keep changing and progressing throughout our life.

Life itself rarely turns out as we've planned and it surprises us with new and exciting possibilities, which we cannot let pass. But once you tick one thing off your list, you can be sure that another replaces it. You could travel the world, get your dream job and find the perfect partner but there will always be something more you want.

So don't give up on these ambitions, but don't focus so relentlessly on what you have left to achieve. We should realise that it's alright to feel content sometimes. Be happy to be content. So as you strive to create the perfect life, don't forget to take the time to appreciate what you already have. In the end, you might just find that being content is what actually makes you happy.



THE BEAUTY COLUMN

Written by **Meghann Scully**

"THIS is a man's world... but it wouldn't be nothing, nothing without a woman or a girl."

Having written columns for quite a few weeks on ladies' beauty products, I was informed that I'm neglecting my male readers. And so, to keep both sides happy, this one is for the boys. You can all now get connected with your metrosexual side. Most guys seem to have a fear of cleansing and moisturising.

We all have pores and we all need to protect those pretty faces of ours. Many of you guys hit the gym and play sports and, as such, have regular dealings with all the outdoor elements. This means you need facial care even more than us ladies do.

For those of you oblivious to facial creams, there is a varied range of male products. And don't worry; they all have a strong smell of masculinity, you won't be sending the ladies running.

L'Oreal has an extensive range of products from skin firming to sensitive and even wrinkle decrease. As many of you may not "have the time" to select the suitable cream simply choose normal skin type to ease you into skin care. The long lasting hydration will build skins defences. A 50ml bottle of moisturiser costs only €11 and will last weeks.

Nivea also does a range of male products. Costing around €8, this cheaper product with pro-vitamin B5 and vitamin E is equally as effective. A more costly yet impressive moisturiser is Hugo Boss Skin revitalising moisturiser. Containing SPF 15 this will keep you protected on and off the pitch. At €25 this designer cream will turn heads.

Finally, for those who would rather save their money, Boots' botanic range has a light weight 12 hour moisturiser. This 50ml bottle costs only €7. So now that you all have the required information with a simple addition to the shopping list, there's absolutely no excuse for blocked pores!



FILLET STEAK

Written by **Paul Carty**

THE floor has become a rich concoction of pizza boxes and Subway wrappers. You side step the sticky bit near the cooker as you make your way to the table. ULSU chicken roll papers have started forming the basis of a tablecloth. Now comes the longing for a home cooked meal. This issue, the recipe is for Steak. Oh yes, Steak. In its purest form. Should you ever find yourself in an upmarket eaterie one of these baby's will burn a hole in your wallet to the tune of at least 30 notes. Courtesy of An Focal, however, you'll be able to have it at half that price.

Ingredients:

1 Large Fillet Steak €9.00
1 Onion 35c
2 Mushrooms 80c
1 Bag oven chips €2.99
1 Packet pepper sauce €1.80

Total €14.94 - serves one

Cook:

So how do you like your steak? Medium suits me fine; a little pinkness on the inside gives a lovely flavour. In any case, the steak needs to be cooked at a medium temperature. Even if you like a well done steak you'll only burn the outside of it by turning up the heat. Chop up the onions and mushrooms. Add the steak to the pan and cook for four minutes on each side, then add the diced onions and mushrooms and cook for a further two minutes on each side. Cook the oven chips as per the instructions on the bag and do likewise when making the pepper sauce. Serve as you wish.

RAPE

DO SOMETHING



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Letters

AN FOCAL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor, UL Students' Union, Castletroy, Limerick. T: 0860435304 E: sucommunications@ul.ie W: www.ulsu.ie
An Focal endeavours to accommodate all letters as far as legally possible. All parties have the right of reply to letters printed herein.

EMAIL FROM JOSEPH O'SHEA TO UL'S COMMUNITY FORUM

Sir, - Unfortunately, the representatives of the Plassey Residents Association will not be attending [Community Forum]. As it is presently constructed the Forum is ineffective. The students are just back and residents have to again endure the anti-social and criminal behaviour. The estates are also littered with rubbish and broken bottles. The footpaths are impassable. It is a disgrace that semester after semester and year after year that residents have to tolerate this behaviour.

There appears to be no pride in the University or its students. These problems will not be solved until the University, the Gardaí and the Council in particular meet their responsibilities to the local community. The Landlords and Businesses who benefit from the students must also be more responsible.

The only group I believe that have really stepped up to the plate has been the Students' Union but unfortunately, they not appear to be reviewing their position. I believe that this is understandable since they were being asked to provide a role and a service that should have been provided by the University and in particular its President, Don Barry, who has never made himself available to the residents. When there is a legitimate attempt to solve these problems the residents will be happy to re-engage. At the moment the Forum is just a PR stunt.

Yours, etc,
JOSEPH O'SHEA

EMAIL OF RESPONSE TO JOSEPH O'SHEA FROM UL'S ASSOCIATE REGISTRAR

Sir, - In the first instance it is grossly unfair to associate the vast majority of students with the actions of a small minority whom you describe in your email as engaging in "anti-social and criminal behaviour". We would encourage any member of the public that witnesses or is aware of anti-social and/or criminal behaviour to report the matter to the Gardaí and to the University. The University is prepared to refer students to the disciplinary process once a complaint is made identifying the student and evidence

supporting the complaint is available. The code of conduct makes reference to both academic and student behaviour and has been shown over the last year to be both robust in procedure and effective in operation.

The University takes its responsibility to the local community seriously and as you are aware has regular contact with the Gardaí regarding current issues, provides information to students on responsible behaviour during orientation week and also during the academic year. The focus of these initiatives is to emphasise to students their responsibility for their own health and wellbeing together with respect and awareness of the needs of others, including their neighbours. A major new initiative this year was the "First 7 weeks" campaign where we seek to assist students in their transition to third level. In addition we also visit student rented accommodation where a complaint has been received identifying a particular house, and where an individual student cannot be identified. You will appreciate that the primary responsibility for the behaviour of tenants in private rented accommodation is in the first instance the responsibility of the tenants and secondly with the landlord. As advised previously the Private Rental Tenancy Board has a complaints procedure in place to deal with complaints by third parties (neighbours) regarding the behaviour of tenants and landlords.

In your email you emphasise the need for all groups to work together and I note from your correspondence during the year satisfaction expressed regarding the organisation of Charity Week last year. Input from all stakeholders in the Community Forum to the Students' Union proved very effective in running this event. The University supported this in a number of ways including supporting the rebranding of RAG Week to Charity Week with a press launch by the President of the University, financial support to the students union in funding the student group Meitheal na Mac Léinn (M&M's) service in the local community, and acknowledging the essential contribution of the Gardaí in providing training and support. I regret the decision of the Plassey Residents not to send a representative to the Community Forum, and wish to advise that the University will continue to fully support all efforts (within our legal power) to promote responsible behaviour by our students

and combat any anti-social behaviour. We will continue to play our part by working with the Students' Union, Limerick County Council, Gardaí and residents, as we believe that this is the most effective way of dealing with the concerns of all stakeholders.

Yours, etc,
DR PAT PHELAN
Associate Registrar
University of Limerick

PROBLEMS WITH OUR SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

Sir, - The social welfare system in Ireland is flawed and does not do enough to promote education among mature students. I speak from personal experience of a system that has alienated me through bureaucracy.

After my job became redundant in January 2010 I found myself stagnating on the live register and in need of training as 10 years of experience in retail counts for little in a sector where jobs are at a premium. After all people do not become redundant, jobs do.

I applied to the University of Limerick and was successful. When I approached the social welfare office in Limerick and explained that I was going back to college they cut my benefits in September. My application for the Back to Education Allowance was rejected on the grounds that I was 30 days short of the current criteria. You must be unemployed for 234 consecutive days, these must be working days. Sundays do not count.

There followed a stack pile of correspondence with local TDs that had to be seen to be believed. None were available to meet face to face as I sought help and advice. All correspondence was written and no progress was made in my case by any politician.

Correspondence with the office of Minister for Social Protection Eamonn O'Cuiv confirmed there was no room for manoeuvre under the current criteria.

In my opinion the system is rigid and the criteria does not take into account individual circumstance. It will pay me to sit at home and do nothing yet will penalise me for trying to improve my employment prospects.

As far as the Department of Social Protection is concerned my case is closed and I am not entitled to any

support. University is expensive. Registration fees and everyday living alone are not affordable to an independent undergraduate with no income.

I will always be proud of my country but certainly not the failed state that operates within it. If I complete my degree against the odds I may take my skills and my tax earnings elsewhere. Future mature students beware.

Yours, etc,
ROBERT MCNAMARA

LETTER OF CORRECTION

A Chara, - It was with great horror that I read the article in Issue 8 of An Focal regarding the Wolfe-Simon et al paper concerning bacteria who replace natural phosphorous with arsenic within their DNA. Had this piece been published in the immediate aftermath of the NASA announcement I could understand the superlative praising of this discovery, but since the claims made in the paper have been quite thoroughly debunked in many media, most notably The Guardian, there is really no excuse for such a lapse.

To explain the errors that have been found in the research; University of British Columbia microbiologist Rosie Redfield explains that the experimental processes were not fit for purpose. "According to an interview with the first author, this research was motivated by a desire to show that organisms could use arsenic in place of phosphorus. The two atoms have very similar chemical properties, but bonds with arsenic are known to be much less stable than those with phosphate, so most researchers think that biological molecules containing arsenic rather than phosphorus would be too unstable to support life. Thus the authors wanted to show that the bacteria had incorporated the arsenic in places where phosphorus would normally be found. They used several methods, each involving a low-tech preparation of cell material and a high-tech identification of the atoms present in the material.

First they collected the bacteria by centrifugation, washed them well, and precisely measured the fraction of arsenic and phosphorus. Cells given only the arsenate supplement contained about 10-fold more arsenic than phosphorus and cells given only the phosphate supplement had 0.5% phosphorus and only 0.001% arsenic. The authors argue the arsenate-grown cells don't contain enough phosphorus to support life. They say that typical heterotrophic bacteria require 1-3%

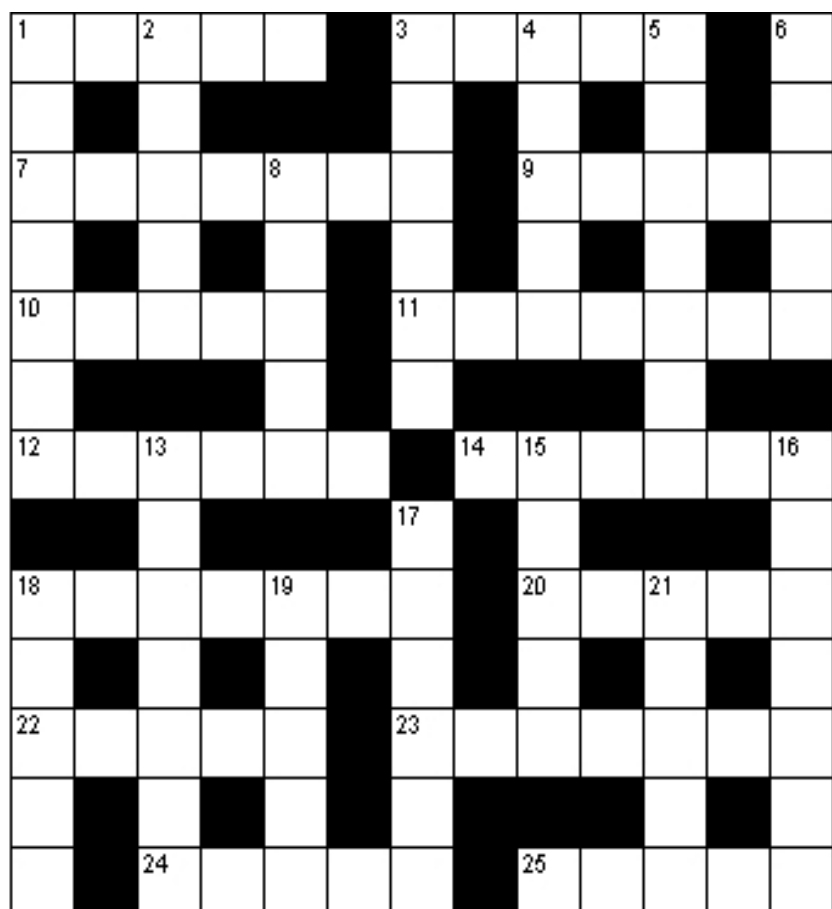
P to support life, but this isn't true. These numbers are just the amounts found in E. coli cells grown in medium with abundant phosphate. They are very unlikely to apply to bacteria growing very slowly under phosphate limitation, and aren't even true of their own phosphate-grown bacteria. The large amount of PHB in the arsenate-grown cells would have skewed this comparison - PHB granules are mainly carbon with no water, and in other species can be as much as 90% of the dry weight of the cells. Thus their presence only in arsenate-grown cells could depress these cells' apparent phosphate concentration by as much as 10-fold.

The authors then grew some cells with radioactive arsenate and no added phosphate, washed and dissolved them, and used extraction with phenol and phenol:chloroform to separate the major molecules. The protein fraction at the interface between the organic and aqueous phases had about 10% of the arsenic label but, because the interface material is typically contaminated with liquid from the aqueous phase, this is not good evidence that the cells' protein contained covalently-bound arsenate in place of phosphorus. About 75% of the arsenic label was in the upper fraction. The authors describe this fraction as DNA/RNA, but it also contains most of the small water-soluble molecules of the cell, so its high arsenic content is not evidence that the DNA and RNA contain arsenic in place of phosphorus. The authors use very indirect evidence to argue that the distribution of arsenic mirrors that expected for phosphate, but this argument depends on so many assumptions that it should be ignored." To prevent this letter from becoming too ludicrously long, that's just one issue with the paper, there are many more. A full debunking and explanation of the fallout of the scandal can be found at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2010/dec/02/nasa-life-form-bacteria-arsenic> including some supremely high quality snark from David Dobbs of Wired Science, which I would recommend everyone should read.

"If the paper is as weak as these critiques hold, NASA appears to have been not just overzealous but reckless — and Science not only went along for the ride, cheering wildly, but put all the gas in the car."

It seems An Focal fell for the same cheerleading.

Yours, etc,
DAVID HARTERY



CLUES

ACROSS:

- Is biggest when wooden (5)
- Follow (5)
- Paid no attention to (7)
- Release a pamphlet, paper (5)
- Instruction (5)
- Legendary horned creature (7)
- Free taste (6)
- The popcorn stadium (6)
- Placed a bet (7)
- Deduce (5)
- Without capacity (5)
- Wandered about (7)
- Ceased (5)
- Small river craft (5)

ANSWERS (ISSUE 8)

Across:

- MANSION
- FACTS
- GAINS
- MACABRE
- AVENGED
- TRAIN
- ENMITY
- ADHERE

- ALLOW
- EARNEST
- ANIMALS
- DOGMA
- SHELF
- DESSERT

Down:

- MAGNATE
- NOISE
- INSIGHT

DOWN:

- They live aboard ship (7)
- Possessed (5)
- Extreme boredom (7)
- Excuse in court (5)
- Agile, nimble (7)
- You'll find one at Oktoberfest (5)
- Not suburban (5)
- An oil tycoon is one (7)
- Manner of speech (5)
- Shorten, truncate (7)
- Loved (6)
- Give up, rights, say (5)
- Graded (5)
- Criminal (5)

QUITE INTERESTING

TWO MINDS NOT ALWAYS BETTER THAN ONE

There is a one-celled animal called Chaos Chaos which is different from any other creature.

Being amorphous (having no definite form or distinct shape), but with three nuclei, it will often try to go in more than one direction at a time, stretching itself to great lengths before pulling back into an indistinct "shape" and going in only one direction. When it reproduces, it becomes three smaller creatures, not two.

Union

THE
PRESIDENT'S
COLUMNWritten by **Ruán Dillon-McLoughlin**, ULSU President

WHY VOTE? It won't make a difference...or will it? We are heading into another four years of uncertainty. Within this time all of you will have finished your current studies and may or may not be pursuing further studies. We have a chance now to vote for that future.

Who we vote for will decide that future. You need to vote for what matters to you. You need to chat to your local candidates and see whose views reflect yours. Do you believe in high taxes and a high level of services? Do you believe politicians should take a pay cut? Do you think education and graduate employment should be prioritised? These decisions will be made over the next four years and you need to vote now to impact those decisions.

The individuals we voted in over the last ten years got us into this mess. We can't do the same. We must be careful who we vote for and make sure they act responsibly. The choice is in your hands.

First things first though, you need to check if your registered to vote on checktheregister.ie. If you're not registered you need to do so at vote2011.ie.

WELFARE
WATCHWritten by **Derek Daly**, Welfare Officer

SO what have I been up to? I spent a lot of Week 1 out of the SU at meetings. Governing Authority was on Tuesday, Week 1 and I spent Friday meeting other Welfare Officers in Dublin and attending the Please Talk National Steering Committee. The 2010/2011 SU mugs have arrived. We just need to arrange dropping them to the campus villages.

On Thursday, Week 0 there was a Colloquium on broadening the Curriculum which was extremely interesting. Among the issues raised were the broadening of courses so that the first two years are entirely focussed on modules that are not core to your qualification. I also raised the issue of filtering employed by many graduate employers with them in a group setting. They want people with extra-curricular experience (sport, clubs, societies, class reps) yet ignore the fact that many of these people's studies suffer as a result of high involvement. Some will review their first class and 2.1 degree screening practices.

As always, I'm here to guide you where I can. I'm best contacted by email on suwelfare@ul.ie if you need me for anything or have any ideas.

ENLIVENING
EDUCATIONWritten by **Aoife Finnerty**, Education Officer

I DON'T know about you, but I'm knackered. And it's only Week 3. Like many students out there, I spend my day rushing around, trying to give time to everything. I don't eat properly, I don't exercise as much as I'd like to, I'm stressed, I burn the candle at both ends, I can't remember the last time I spent a cent on buying myself something really nice and I don't drink as much water as I should.

In a nutshell, I give time and attention to everything except to myself and my wellbeing. That's why I'm at work almost an hour after I should have finished, why I didn't get lunch today until well after 3pm and why my head feels like the wall of a handball alley (if a wall has feelings, that is). So the moral of the story is this. Don't be like me!

Frankie says relax and so do I. Tonight go and have some fun, do something for yourself, have your favourite dinner or desert or whatever. Just enjoy your night, you'll be stressed as hell for long enough!

CAMPAIGNS
BRIEFWritten by **Vivion Grisewood**, Campaigns and Services Officer

I HOPE everyone had a good SHAG week and had a great International week. I want to thank everyone who gave a hand to make the week such a success. There were tons of condoms, lube, glyde dams and sex booklets given out.

This is Road Safety week and you've probably seen the crashed cars on campus. A number of UL students have unfortunately lost their lives to road traffic accidents in the past year. Together with the university, the council and the Gardaí, we hope to raise awareness of the importance of road safety.

There will be information on road safety available from our Facebook this week as well as leaflets, flyers and videos. On Thursday, there will be a demonstration of an emergency response unit operation, run by the council, Gardaí, ambulance service and Fire service. It is a spectacle. Afterwards, there will be a road safety talk in the Jean Monnet.

There will be some prizes for those who attend, including petrol vouchers and a new bicycle. There will be lots going on during the week, so keep an eye on our Facebook page and the ULSU ENTs page!

WORDS
FROM THE
PSAWritten by **Dan Comerford**, PSA President

THE PSA Graduate Ball takes place Friday, 25 February in the luxurious, four star Strand Hotel. It is the most successful and most popular event run by the PSA. This year is set to be the biggest with a five course menu, free drinks reception, band and DJ to highlight some of what's in store. Tickets cost only €40 and are on sale now from the PSA Presidents' office off the Stables courtyard, the SU reception and the PSA Exec. You can reserve seats so you can sit comfortably next to your friends.

Postgrad workshops: Thursday, Week 3 will see a workshop on CV creation and skill identification. If you are interested in this please register by Tuesday, Week 3. If there are any workshops that you would like to see run, please let me know at dan.comerford@ul.ie

Faculty nights (where you can meet all those studying in your faculty) take place in the Scholars from 8pm with free food and free entry.

Science & Engineering Faculty: Tuesday, Week 3.

Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences: Thursday, Week 3.

Kemmy Business School: Tuesday, Week 4.

Education & Health Sciences: Thursday, Week 4.

POSTGRADUATE
STUDY FAIR

Wednesday,
9 February, 12pm
to 3pm, EGO10

Written by **Mary Sweeney**,
UL Head of Careers

DO you think you might be interested in Postgraduate Study when you graduate?

If so, you are in good company as more than 30% of UL graduates go on to some form of further study or research when they graduate.

This has become a very popular option during the recession as it provides an opportunity to improve your employment prospects by gaining a further qualification which can be very attractive to employers. Choosing between the vast arrays of postgraduate courses can be very difficult. To help

you explore and evaluate these options, the Careers Service is organising a Postgraduate Study Fair on Wednesday, 9 February and this will be open to all students and graduates, regardless of year of study.

The purpose of the Postgraduate Study Fair is to provide information on postgraduate study opportunities available in Ireland, and in some international locations. Specialist staff from all the Irish Universities, Institutes of Technology, and other institutions will be available to answer questions on a range of issues including: selection procedures, application process, financial support, course content, employment prospects, etc. It will be a very informal atmosphere with

plenty of opportunities for individual discussions with the experts.

We will have more than 40 exhibition stands representing Irish higher education institutions, some UK universities, and a few organizations representing postgraduate study options in Australia, USA and Germany. One of the features of this year's event is the inclusion of Georgetown University Law Centre in the USA. UL will be very well represented as each Faculty will have an individual stand.

If you plan to attend the Postgraduate Study Fair, check out the full list of exhibitors and pre-register online at www.ul.ie/careers/careers/events/fairs.shtml#postgrad

ROAD SAFETY
WEEK 2011

- NEVER DRINK AND DRIVE.
- ALWAYS WEAR YOUR SEATBELT.
- NEVER DRIVE WHILE ON DRUGS.
- WEAR HI-VIZ JACKETS WHEN WALKING.
- DRIVE SAFELY AND ARRIVE ALIVE

BROUGHT
TO
YOU
BY:



University of Limerick
Students Union
Aontas na Mac Léinn
Ollscoil Luimnigh



The Strategic Plan

BUY IN AND GIVE IT TIME

Written by **Ruán Dillon McLoughlin**

IS it a waste of time or a life changing document? From examining the University's five year plan "Pioneering and Connected: The Strategic Plan 2011-2015" it is hard to tell. It has all the hallmarks of a successful, corporate strategic plan. It is eye catching and easy to read. It is visionary, yet measurable. And you might even say it's inspiring. So why aren't we all on our way to Paddy Powers if it's a sure bet?

Well, there is a key part of the document which represents an uncertainty. And that is you.

With the University and the country in one of the worst financial crises ever seen, it is unrealistic to expect any injection of cash or resources to ensure that the visions of the document come to be. These visions will have to

be delivered by you. It is up to all of us to engage with this document and ensure it's a success. So as a student, what can be done? What actions can we make that will satisfy the criteria for a progressive UL, as set out in the Strategic Plan?

We need to challenge ourselves. We need to get out of our comfort zones and reach our potential. We need to engage with our community, both on and off campus. The engagement will require a level of dedication and understanding. Compromises will need to be struck where possible, in all aspects of campus life.

While we all have a part to play, the staff of this University will play a big role in the implementation of the document, as important administrators

of an enhanced Student Experience.

In the face of cutbacks, UL's staff is expected to do more for less. Entire departments of this University are feeling the pinch as resources become fewer. There isn't a whole lot we can do about these cutbacks. But the Strategic Plan does offer us a formula. It paves the way for an ever more connected and synchronised staff. And the word 'staff' is key. It arises 30 times in the document. The strength and identity of UL's staff is also described in the document as "unique", "distinctively bold" and "entrepreneurial."

The Plan chooses specific areas in which the campus community must focus for the institution's long term sustainability. Another key word is research, which occurs 147 times. This

is indicative of the importance and the challenge represented by Goal Two.

It is important because it represents a new and sustainable source of income. It is a challenge, because you've got to spend money, to make money.

While this seems suitably vague, it is in fact simple economics and many of us have the ability to make that simple equation work. The document is not life changing, nor is it a waste of time. Rather, it is a device. It is intended to get this University through tough times. And it can work. All it needs is for you to buy into it.

"We need to challenge ourselves. We need to get out of our comfort zones and reach our potential."

WHAT WILL THE PLAN MEAN FOR US?

Student Reporter, Colin Clarke, gives his perspective as a first year facing into the Strategic Plan over the next seven semesters.

Written by **Colin Clarke**



WHAT struck me immediately from reading the plan was how it emphasises the importance of the 'student experience'. I'm glad to see such emphasis being put on this.

I think it is imperative for all students, especially for those in first year, to have the opportunity to acquire this. Prof. Barry has presented the importance of the student experience. But I wonder how he defines it.

I believe the experience is one that shows you had the time of your life in college but also shows that being socially active and going wild and crazy every now and then will not prevent you from being academically successful.

I guess the 'student experience' for everybody will be different but at the same time have the same goal, to have a blast and get a degree.

It was a message that the 'first seven weeks programme' presented

to students. The 'first seven weeks programme' plays a huge role in the fact that UL has the lowest dropout rate of any University in Ireland.

Aside from the 'student experience', what else does this new strategic plan mean for the average first year student?

Great emphasis has also been put on the Internationalisation of the University. This will give more students the opportunity of Co-Op and Erasmus abroad.

It will also include the action of increasing the intake of international undergraduate and postgraduate students by up to 50%.

This will pave the way for UL to become more internationally recognised and will contribute to UL's goal of increasing its world ranking of 451st in the world's top Universities.

The plan has great ideas and proposals but how on earth can the University afford it? Are they not aware of the mass cutbacks being implemented across the education sector? I look out from my balcony in Dromroe and see the cranes remain on the skyline.

The JCBs are still trudging around campus. I think to myself, is this the only University that has not realised funding has been slashed? No, the answer is we are the luckiest of the seven Universities. Why? Due to the generosity of one billionaire philanthropist Chuck Feeney who

has donated over €1bn to Irish Universities, most of it to UL.

The €9m construction of the 'Living Bridge' which unites our campus is the longest pedestrian bridge in Ireland. And it was down to Chuck Feeney's generosity.

Then there is the new Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, the centre for Health Sciences, the new Kemmy Business School, and the construction of one of the largest all-weather sports pitches in Europe and many more facilities which have helped make UL the most impressive University in the country.

The Strategic Plan aims to move UL forward in all areas of development. However, I cannot help but wonder what will happen if Chuck Feeney decides to stop donating to the University.

Will we have to seek funding from elsewhere? Perhaps UL must find a new Multi-millionaire. Maybe it will be JP McManus, who has already shown signs that he would like to donate more to UL.

"I'm glad to see emphasis being put on the student experience."

THE GOALS EXPLAINED

Written by **Darragh Roche, Deputy Editor**



THE Strategic Plan consists of four goals that the University aims to achieve by 2015.

The goals are a rough outline of the University's ambitions and while they set out clear targets, there are few concrete measures for how these goals will be achieved. Improving and commercialising the University's research is one of the Plan's top priorities.

This is to be achieved through further co-operation with other national and international institutions.

The number of students at all levels and of all kinds is set to increase but there are few suggestions in the Plan as to how UL will become more attractive for these students. The University also intends to improve and diversify its courses and give them a greater international focus.

IN FIGURES: THE AIMS OF THE PLAN

95% undergraduate retention rate

50% increase in research income from the EU

30% increase in postgraduates

50% increase in international students

15% increase in mature students

30% increase in UL students studying abroad

50% increase in publication citations

200% increase in participants in the President's Volunteer Programme

20% increase in number of patents awarded per € 1m of research expenditure

300% increase in teaching and research collaborations with Mary I

The Strategic Plan

95% UNDERGRADUATE RETENTION RATE

20% INCREASE IN PATENTS PER €1M

50% INCREASE IN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

50% RISE IN PUBLICATION CITATION

Pioneering & Connected
Strategic Plan
2011-2015

GOAL ONE:

“AN OUTSTANDING AND DISTINCTIVE EXPERIENCE”

GOAL ONE aims to provide students with a college experience that “will enable them to become knowledgeable, skilled and confident graduates”.

The University intends to foster excellence in teaching, small group and self-directed learning experiences and maintain a balanced curriculum to develop students’ capacity for lifelong learning. The plan places a large emphasis on making graduates as versatile and adaptable as possible and further commits the University to Co-operative Education, which the plan claims is an “intrinsic and distinctive part of the student experience”.

This Goal also entails increasing the diversity of UL’s undergraduates by providing greater access and flexibility to students. The plan emphasises that degree programmes should be relevant and adaptable and should provide graduates with the skills needed to join the workforce in a changing economy.

The University has committed itself to providing wider choice for students, nurturing extra-curricular activities, providing students with research skills and undergraduate internships with research groups and has promised to re-enforce the requirement of a substantial piece of independent student-directed work in the final year, which is generally the Final Year Project (FYP).

There are also plans for ambitious increases in the number of mature students, students with disabilities and students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as postgraduates. The plan pledges to further help new

students with the transition to third level and to continue the alliance with NUI Galway by developing joint programmes, sharing modules and student exchanges.

There are plans to improve “the learning environment” by improving library and information space, services and collections and by using technology “in ways that enhance learning”.

UL says it will establish a centre of excellence in teaching and teacher education and provide leadership in sustainable development.

GOAL TWO:

“ENHANCE OUR RESEARCH PROFILE”

GOAL TWO is the most ambitious and the most difficult. The University wishes to rapidly increase the number of doctoral students on campus, increase the number of citations of UL publications and the number of patents awarded for the money invested. The plan also says that EU research funding should increase dramatically, a fact emphasised by President Barry at the launch of the plan.

Many of the research targets centre on co-operation with other research institutions and national and multinational companies and have a distinctly economic dimension. The University intends to create “significant and sustained interactions between researchers and industry” and plans to build relationships with industry in order to “embed research” into those companies and develop their capacity for research. Further, the University will develop an internship programme that will allow exchanges between the University’s research groups and

“external industrial and professional partners”.

This Goal entails identifying the ability of University research to be commercialised and/or be of benefit to civil society and the professions.

To this end, the University’s intellectual property will aim to deliver “optimum benefit” and provide rewards for the researchers and the University. Commercial potential will be a top priority of research and it will become a criterion for reporting research activities. UL will co-operate with the Irish Technology Leadership Group, Shannon Development and NUI Galway to create a national hub for energy research and development. It will also work with NUI Galway and the Georgia Institute of Technology to establish a joint Translational Research Institute that will focus on use of technologies in Irish industry.

The plan re-iterates the need to find other sources of funding for research and aims to increase the number of books published with “prestigious publishers” as well as publications on the ISI Web of Knowledge.

GOAL THREE:

“SHARPEN OUR INTERNATIONAL FOCUS”

THIS section of the plan outlines how the University will create a more culturally diverse and international campus community and how it will give students a more cosmopolitan and European education, while continuing to use international co-operation as a means of improving its research profile. As part of this Goal, the number of international students taking up

undergraduate and postgraduate places will increase rapidly and the number of UL students who go on Erasmus and non-EU study abroad schemes will increase. This is in accordance with the EU’s plans for increased student mobility within Europe. The number of international co-op placements will also increase.

UL will implement a four year “international education business plan” by March this year that will focus on recruiting foreign students and researchers. As part of this policy of internationalisation, more degree programmes will have international elements and the University will continue to hire accomplished foreign academics and researchers, who will have a teaching role. This Goal also reiterates the University’s commitment to co-operation with foreign partners, especially EU bodies, research groups and scholarly societies.

The plan also aims to increase the number of partner universities with which UL is connected, both to facilitate research and to “develop staff and student exchanges”. These exchanges will also be aimed at developing the University’s research priorities.

GOAL FOUR:

“ECONOMIC, EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE”

THIS GOAL is primarily intended to improve the economic relationship between the University and the Shannon Region. It also aims to make UL an important centre in the development of the greater Limerick

area by influencing policy decisions at local, regional and national levels.

The University intends to work closely with “strategic partners” to promote job creation and develop indigenous industry and will also incorporate this into UL’s aims to commercialise its research and to further develop spin-off companies that have emerged and will emerge from the University’s research.

The plan also commits the University to helping with the development of the social and cultural life of Limerick City and the wider Shannon Region. It is important to remember that UL’s North Campus is in Co. Clare. UL wishes to improve its visibility and relationship with Clare and with Limerick City. In order to do this, UL has pledged to be involved with Limerick’s Regeneration agencies and educational initiatives.

A significant part of this Goal is the development of UL as a “centre of cultural, artistic, festive and sporting activity” in order to bring a sense of pride in the University, the city and the region. The University plans to increase the use of the campus’s cultural amenities and allow wider access by community groups and teams.

UL will also seek to accommodate national and international events to showcase the campus and “maximise our economic, social and cultural contribution”. This section of the plan re-affirms the alliance with NUI Galway and UL’s commitment to environmental initiatives and sustainability. It also promises to promote the use of the Irish language.

Although Goal Four lays out ambitious plans for UL’s development as a cultural and sporting centre, there is no reference to Clubs and Societies, which form no small part of the sporting and social activities on campus at present.

Sport

STEEL OVER STYLE AS UL BEGIN FITZGIBBON WITH VICTORY

Written by **Eoin King**

PICTH One again in January. And for the UL hurlers two weeks ago, it was a great place to start the Fitzgibbon competition. Paul Kelly's goal with four minutes remaining was the deciding factor in this contest with UCC. After a great break from defence the sliotar travelled the length of the field to find Kelly, whose finish, although far from cleanly struck, proved effective enough to unsettle McCarthy in the UCC goal and find the roof of the net.

UL will be pleased with the result despite the hard fought nature of the

win. After a close first half which was tied three times before Egan pulled UCC into the break with the lead, UL had managed to amass a tally of seven wides and struggling to get their ball inside to the full forward line being well repelled by the Cork team. Boran's point after 12 minutes seemed to settle UL, who then proceeded to swap points, leaving the scores level at 0-6 apiece entering the final ten minutes of the half.

The teams entered the dressing rooms with very different momentum as UL

were struggling for possession around the middle. The problem looked to have intensified when play resumed. The big following on the banks looked set to witness a one sided opener as UCC rattled off four more points within the space of six minutes to leave UL behind by a margin of seven. But this team was never going to fold. Behind this management staff has always provided great displays of skill and determination the last few years to wade off doubt. Morris quickly pointed two frees and, reliably, the stalwarts of the

team sprung into action. The half backs tightened up and with the experience of Martin Walsh, Seamus Hickey and Kieran Joyce UL reclaimed a hold of the game. Morris won two more frees after a point from himself and a nice score from Burke. Cronin made his mark on the game with 11 minutes remaining before Kelly registered his second point of the game in front of the posts to leave the score level at 0-14 each. With nine minutes left to play, it was game on. UCC went a point up once again before Kelly's goal. They

replied with the final point of the game too. But the ending proved less dramatic than the spirited fight back as UL defended assuredly in the final moments. An encouraging start for UL who will know they have a lot more to improve on but can be happy with their response to a real challenge.



GALVIN CLEARED TO TAKE ON UL

Written by **Robert McNamara**

KERRY footballer Paul Galvin has received clearance to make his debut for DIT in the first round of the Sigerson Cup against UL on 17 February. There was confusion regarding his eligibility as Galvin is currently undertaking a course in fashion buying that runs from January to December over two academic years rather than the normal academic semesters.

Galvin will struggle to be fit for the game as he is currently feeling the after effects of an operation and a hip problem that has hindered him for some time. Both DIT and UL will feature teams packed with talent. UL will have Kerry players Anthony Maher and David Moran among their ranks alongside Galway's Sean Armstrong. Galvin if fit will line up next to Diarmuid Connolly of Dublin

and Aidan O' Shea of Mayo. DIT are regarded as favourites for the cup so all eyes will be on this game to see if the Finuge man's presence can inspire the Dubs to victory.

Galvin is hot property at the moment and not just in the GAA world. The Irish media has developed a fascination with the sharply dressed, tattooed, fashionista of late having recently appeared on the Late Late Show talking about his belief in positive visualisation. He has reminders on his phone that ring once a month to motivate him to win various team and personal awards.

He was also the subject of a recent RTE documentary that highlighted his on field troubles, his many successes and his unusual taste in clothes. 'Galvinised' showed the former footballer of the year coaching a local

team in Kerry wearing skin tight jeans with his socks pulled over and a pair of boots.

The former secondary school teacher is also trying to carve out a career for himself in the fashion world and along with the course he is undertaking in DIT, has been rewarded with his own fashion column in the Sunday Independent.

People have differing views on Galvin's fashion sense but his ability on the football pitch is not questioned. If fit, the four time All-Ireland champion will be a formidable opponent against UL in this month's Sigerson Cup clash.

A GOAL A MINUTE

UL Ladies win WSCAI National Futsal final and Qualify for European Final

Written by **Stephen Griffin**

UL TOOK full advantage of familiar territory to clinch the WSCAI National Futsal Intervarsities title at UL on Saturday.

Led by player of the tournament, Julie-Ann Russell, the hosts won all four fixtures on the day to seal the national title and secure a place at the EUSA University Futsal Championships in Tampere, Finland, this summer. Republic of Ireland women's international Russell scored eight goals in four games. She provided the decisive figure in the final: an emphatic 7-1 win over IT Sligo, when she bagged two goals in the opening 50 seconds of that fixture. Russell found the net after just 20 seconds when she ran at the IT Sligo defence then produced a stinging shot that took a couple of deflections. Her second goal 30 seconds later was from close range. She then turned provider for Lynsey McKey to make it 3-0

in the third minute. McKey made it 4-0 in the fifth minute as the result became beyond doubt and Jenny Critchley continued the rout with a rasping drive into the roof of the IT Sligo net three minutes later.

Ruth Fahy stretched UL's lead to six in the 14th minute before Moira Harrington gave Sligo something to cheer about three minutes later. Lucy Hannon was unlucky to hit the UL upright less than minute later but Sligo's misfortune was complete when McKey notched her hat-trick in the 18th minute with a shot from the edge of box. The other games UL won were: 3-0 v UCC, 5-0 v NUIM and 3-1 v DCU. The girls can now look forward to competing at the highest level when they attend the EUSA University Futsal Championships taking place from 16th to 24th of July in Tampere in Finland.



The UL Team celebrates with the cup after victory over Sligo IT. Image: Diarmuid Greene/SPORTSFILE

UL SOCCER CLUB ROUND-UP

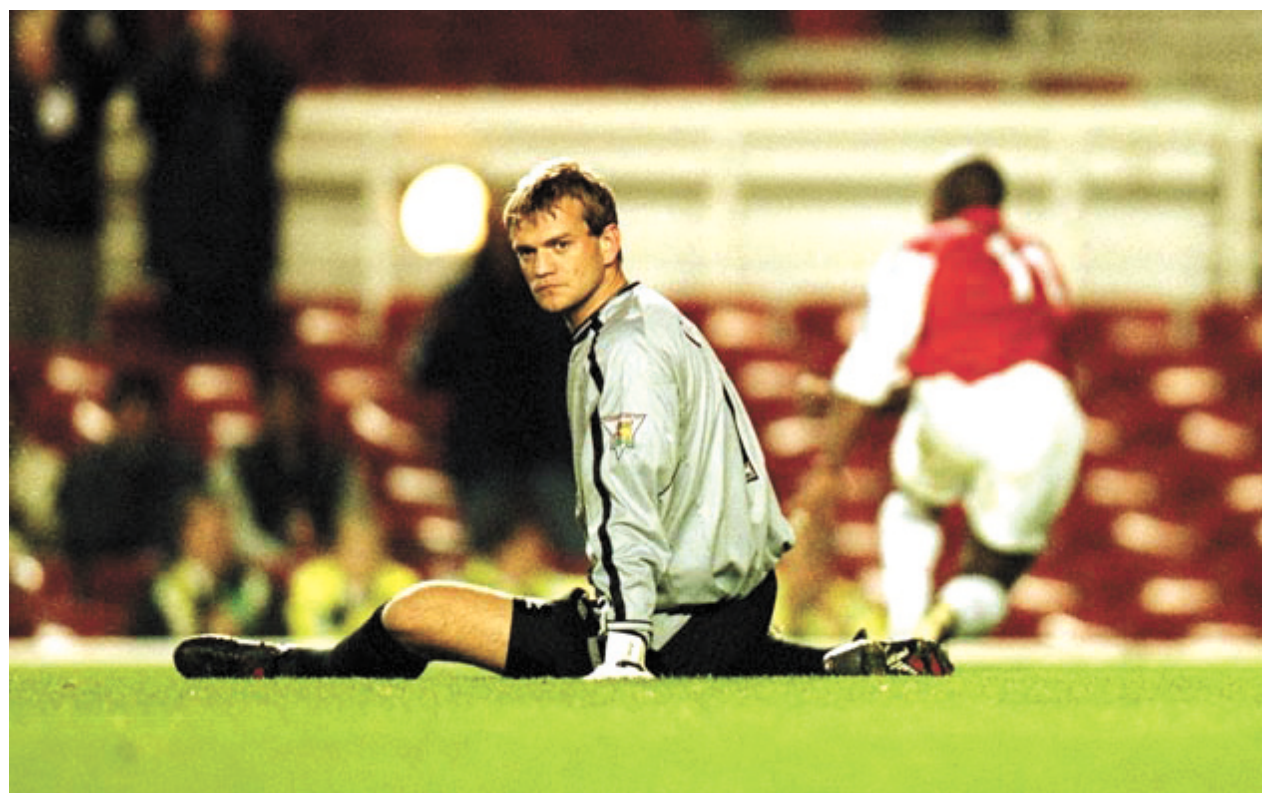
Written by **Cian Healy**

WEEK ONE was a quiet one in terms of action at the Soccer Club, with only the UL Ladies B team having a fixture, which was the Quarter Final of the Challenge Cup. The girls were unlucky

to go down 2-0 to a much improved NUIG side from last semester, but despite being a division lower than the Galway side, UL had the better of the play for the majority of the game but just couldn't find the net. An early penalty and a 30 yard screamer assured NUIG their victory, much to UL's disappointment. The game saw the return of Tracey O'Reilly to the club, and also debuts of two new American recruits, Meghan O'Grady and Nicky Miller. To join UL Soccer, see details on our website.

Sport

FORGOTTEN FOOTBALLER, ROY CARROLL



Roy casts a sullen look at a photographer.

Written by **Robert McNamara**

IT is a moment that will never be forgotten as long as the Premier League exists. From just over the half way line Pedro Mendes of Tottenham Hotspur swung his foot at a bouncing ball in a speculative effort at Old Trafford against Manchester United. Red Devils' keeper Roy Carroll scrambled back towards his line and looked to have it under control until, well, you know the rest.

In fairness to Sir Alex Ferguson, Carroll was a young talent worth taking a punt on. After starting his career at Hull City during the mid-nineties, the Fermanagh native made a name for himself at Wigan where he helped the Latics to the Football League trophy in 1999 and was named second division goalkeeper of the year in 2000.

A move to Manchester United followed where Carroll found himself

vying for the number one spot with Tim Howard and Fabien Barthez. He made enough appearances in the 2003 league winning team to earn a medal and a year later he made a superb save in the FA Cup semi-final against Arsenal to help book United's place in the final where he came on as a sub for Tim Howard.

The 2004-2005 season was when Carroll's woes really began. After the infamous Pedro Mendes incident, Carroll was dropped for a few games. He returned to the team to face AC Milan in the Champions League. Unfortunately he was caught out again and parried a limp shot straight to Hernan Crespo who put the ball away and Milan through. Carroll was actually offered a new contract at United after that but walked when Ferguson could not guarantee he would be first choice. West Ham was the Northern Ireland

international's next destination but injury saw him lose his place to Robert Green and later move to Glasgow Rangers. He made just one appearance in the Scottish League Cup before a complicated contract wrangle saw him moved onto Derby County. Carroll became first choice at Pride Park but after a sending off against Norwich City he failed to regain his first team status and when Nigel Clough replaced Paul Jewell at the relegated club, Carroll was again discarded.

Carroll now minds the sticks at Danish club, Odense Boldklub, where he plays alongside another Manchester United reject, Eric Djemba-Djemba. Incidentally, United's new goalkeeper Thomas Lindegaard was behind Carroll in the pecking order.

SPORTS QUIZ

1. Kobe Bryant of the LA Lakers recently climbed to eight on the NBA's all-time scoring list. Who is number one on that list?
2. The film 'The Fighter' follows the fortunes of Mickey Ward. In 'Cinderella Man' which boxer does Russell Crowe portray?
3. Who won the 2001 FA Cup? And what was so significant about it?
4. Where will this year's World Athletics Championships be held?
5. Where will this year's Fitzgibbon Cup final take place?
6. The dynamic kiwi Sonny Bill Williams will play for which Super 15 team this season?
7. When was the last time Kerry won an All-Ireland minor championship football title?
8. How many Premiership clubs has Damien Duff played for?
9. What is Henry Shefflin's career total in scoring from championship action?
10. Who is the highest ranked Irish snooker player?

1. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
2. James Braddock
3. Liverpool. It was the first FA cup final to be played outside of England
4. Daegu, South Korea
5. WIT
6. Crusaders, Canterbury
7. 1994
8. 4
9. 23-390
10. Fergal O'Brien



FANTASY PREMIER LEAGUE TIPS AND ADVICE

Written by **Darren Mulryan**

DO you fancy yourself as a bit of a tactical master like Jose Mourinho? Or are you an expert at man management like Alex Ferguson?

As we enter the halfway stage of the Fantasy Premier League, your managerial instincts are put to the test with endless decisions about captaincy, starting 11 etc.

Let An Focal ease the burden of managerial decisions to help you avoid becoming the laughing stock of all your mates. The next round is an ideal chance to bag some serious points to climb up that table, so here is a few players to consider snapping up.

1. Javier Hernandez: Chicarito will prove to be a shrewd piece of business as his goal scoring record coming off the bench is, frankly, quite impressive. Over 10 goals as an impact sub thus far shows his capability. For just £6.4m he could bag you the points to keep you ahead of the crowd.

2. Darren Bent: With Bent's move to Villa came a signal of intent by unleashing a well taken goal in his first game in a claret shirt. Expect Bent to be given plenty of playing time in the next couple of weeks, as other Villa strikers seem to be misfiring. And don't forget the quality service he will receive from Stuart Downing and Gabriel Agbonlahor.

3. Chris Brunt: The West Brom man has been in terrific form lately and is second in the Premier League assists chart, only behind Manchester United Winger Nani. With over 87 points this season he would prove to be a clever little earner.

4. Breda Hangeland: Every solid team needs a defender that can rack you up a few cheeky points. An impressive score from Breda so far this term with over 90 points. That's smart value. Get on it. Follow these tips and maybe come the end of the season you will have showed what football management is all about. UL's next top manager. Watch this space, Mourinho.



Clockwise from top: Javier Hernandez, Brede Hangeland, Chris Brunt and Darren Bent.

Sport

'FORGET THE STATISTICS AND CRASS PUNDITRY, THIS CHAMPIONS LEAGUE REMAINS WIDE OPEN'

Written by **Mark Connolly**,
Sports Editor

A GOAL difference of 56, a goal scored average of almost four per game, a strike force that has fired home 70 times already this season in a domestic league that they now have well and truly wrapped up. And we're only in February. One would be forgiven for thinking that these are the statistics of the traditional monopolies in poor Easter European leagues or maybe one of the two powers in Scotland? It is, rather, the frightening record of an unstoppable FC Barcelona while the league that they have wrapped up already is one that includes the most

expensively assembled team in world football history, Real Madrid CF. Against such a background, one could view very sympathetically, Eamon Dunphy's assertion that UEFA just hand over the trophy to the Catalan giants right away.

Barcelona seems to be on a different planet next to its European rivals at the moment, playing the game in a way that redefines the word beauty. But have they now reached such a level of dominance in Europe as to guarantee glory in Wembley on 28 May and to justify their rather short odds?

While the statistics do not belie Barca's crushing superiority against all-comers this term, they do serve to hide the difficulties that the Catalans have encountered previously against the kind of tactically wise and well organised opposition that they rarely encounter in a Spanish League renowned for its culture of attacking, free flowing football. One such example was their sensational reverse at the hands of Inter in the San Siro last April. Put under pressure by a well organised defence and midfield, who sat back and knew better than to try to out pass them, they

were stung on the counter by the pace of the Milan side's break into attack. Barcelona were very lucky not to suffer a similar fate a year previously in Stamford Bridge while the Pique Puyol axis was equally fortunate to survive two golden opportunities handed to Arjen Robben in last year's World Cup Final.

Real Madrid will be more formidable opponents now than last November as the return from injury of the brilliant Brazilian, Kaka, will add pace and quality to their attack. Meanwhile Man Utd, having conceded just 1 goal in



Europe this term may feel confident of their potential to weather any Barca storm and especially if the Rooney-Berbatov partnership catches fire. But it is the signing by of Fernando Torres by a resurgent Chelsea that could alter the balance in Europe toward the London side that is made to stretch Barcelona to their limit. Forget the statistics and crass punditry, this Champions League remains wide open.

2011 HURLING PREVIEW

Written by **Eoin King**

AS the sporting calendar goes, January lacks big entertainment. For substance it offered us the Australian Open and the transfer window. There's a problem when 45 minutes of transfer speculation surrounding the players of Wigan and Stoke is more interesting to watch on Sky than an actual encounter between teams.

The Superbowl kicks it off and Irish rugby gains greater interest with the return of the six nations. Weeknights are illuminated with Champions League Football. And the National Hurling Leagues shines light on the inter-county scene. In September, Tipp feasted on Kilkenny's ill-fated goal to win five consecutive All Irelands. First game of the NHL? Kilkenny against Tipperary. With a different context but no less interesting when trying to gauge who is slightly better positioned to lift Liam this year. Tipp return without Liam Sheedy while the cats must hurl till summer without Henry Shefflin. These are losses neither team desired, but both can live with. Tipp seem appealing now. They have the advantage of blending in the fine U-21 team that annihilated Galway last year and gives the added bonus of having Noel McGrath.

But Kilkenny is Kilkenny. Brian Cody is still in charge. Until September and the 'Lar Corbett show', few backed against them, claiming their fifth consecutive. This year, Shefflin will be back while the rest of the Ballyhale contingent will begin hurling from the first game of the league. Tommy Walsh and JJ Delaney

still carry hurls, so defensive security is not a major problem. But the need to contain Corbett and the Tipp full forward line should be addressed. This first game will indicate Cody's mindset. The rest will hurl too, some with much optimism. Kilkenny lost a game and Tipp were beatable last year as even Cork proved in Munster. It will be the same fixture in the first round this year. Yet, Cork look transitional and the absence of Sean Og's name at number seven is a jarring sight. UL's Pa Cronin is one of a nice bright bunch of new players, but without a leader like O'Hailpin, this year at least, an All-Ireland final looks a stretch too far. In Galway, John McIntyre will be looking to complement some defensive solidity with the passion that brought Tipp to the brink in an entertaining game last August while Joe Canning is still worth the entrance fee alone. They look the likeliest of the chasing pack to dislodge Tipp, especially if they get over Kilkenny in Leinster. Next behind is Waterford, forever young as Bob Dylan would say. Davy Fitz and Tony Browne remain at the helm. There could be method in their madness by the time August comes. Just like Fitzgerald and McIntyre in Galway, Anthony Daly will need to leave a mark as Dublin try to drown out all the 'so close yet so far' comments because Limerick won't be an embarrassment this year and Wexford never truly disappear.

Predictions: NHL: Tipperary, Leinster: Galway, Munster: Tipperary, All Ireland: Kilkenny

LAST 16 FIX SIGHTS ON WEMBLEY

Written by **Darren Mulryan**

THE race for the biggest prize in European football steps up a gear with the remaining teams in the UEFA Champions League competing to step out at Wembley on 28 May. An Focal takes a look at some of this year's key ties.

AC Milan v Tottenham

The Rossoneri face a tough test against a Spurs side that put up convincing displays against their city rivals Inter in the last round.

With playmaker Ronaldinho packing up to Brazil, Massimiliano Allegri's side lack creative depth and also have an aging side. They will be no pushover, though.

Tottenham come in to this tie with stellar performances from the likes of Gareth Bale and Rafael Van Der Vaart. Redknapp's men must be confident at the moment. Prediction: Tottenham

Arsenal v Barcelona

Possibly the most attractive tie in the bag. Wenger's men are considered underdogs going into this one.

Lionel Messi and Co have been playing some beautiful football this term and are justifiable favourites to go through.

Arsenal have improved on both European and Domestic levels, but

need Cesc Fabregas on form to get an advantage over Barca. Prediction: Barcelona

Internazionale v Bayern

A heavyweight clash between the holders and the Bundesliga's struggling giants. With both teams studded with world class performers, expect to see some top quality stuff on offer. Bayern won five out of six matches in the last round whilst Inter were less consistent. Performances from players such as Robben and Ribery should make the difference for Louis van Gaal's side. Prediction: Bayern

Lyon v Real Madrid

The "Special One" brings Los Blancos into this tie in typically confident mood. Their squad has been bolstered with the arrival of World Cup star Mesut Ozil. Also worth a mention is the ever mercurial Cristiano Ronaldo who is scoring goals for fun at the moment. Michel Bastos needs

to maintain his goal scoring form to boost Lyon's chances. The French side proved last year that they are capable of putting up a challenge to Jose's men. Prediction: Real Madrid

Marseille v Manchester United

Didier Deschamps had a decent record in his playing career against the Red Devils however his side chances of progressing have taken a hit with the injury of key playmaker Mathieu Valbuena. Andre Pierre Gignac may have to carry the goal scoring responsibilities in this one. Fergie's men may lack the attacking spark of previous seasons but their defence is the tightest in the Champions League, only conceding one goal in the group stage. Prediction: Manchester United

Kobenhaven v Chelsea

The Danish title holders did well to qualify from the group stages finishing second behind Barca. They have a well-disciplined side which includes ex blues player Jesper Gronkjaer. Expect a solid effort from the Danish side. Chelsea are favourites here and have reached the semi-final stage five times in the past seven seasons. Drogba and Co should have enough to progress. Prediction: Chelsea

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Dr Oetker ristorante pizza - €2.50
Big Als crispy chicken fillets - €2.00
Green isle spicy wedges - €2.00
Yoplait strawberry fruit yoghurt - 1/2price €1.33
Muller corner range - 2 for €1.00
Glenmor beef mince 400g - €3.00
Crossgar chicken fillet 2pk - €2.99
Crossgar chicken fillets 4pk - €4.99

Household

Dove shampoo /conditioner range - 1/2price €1.85
Fructis shampoo/conditioner - €1.75
Lynx shower gel 250ml - buy 1 get 1 free

Deli

Sausage baguette & bag of Tayto 37g & water 500ml - €2.50
Pic'n'popin' chicken & potato cubes - €3.00
All butter croissant - 2 for €1.00

Minerals

Tipperary water sport cap 500ml - 2 for €1.00
Lucuzade 380ml range - €1.00
Lucozade sport lite 500ml - 2 for €1.00
Spar cranberry juice 1ltr - 1/2price €0.89

Grocery

Dolmio bolognese sauce twin pk - €2.50
Dolmio stir in - 2 for €2.50
Pot noodle range - €1.00
Batchelor beans 3pk - €1.50

UISU

AN FOCAL



Clubs And Societies Did A Lot Over The Christmas Break. See What Some Of Them Got Up To. Pages 22 & 23.

8th February 2011

Issue 9 FREE
Volume XIX

BLACK SWAN TIPPED FOR OSCAR GLORY



IF Natalie Portman does not get the Oscar for her performance in Black Swan, there is something seriously wrong in the world. I can honestly say I have never come out of a movie feeling so overwhelmed. Having heard good things about the film I was expecting something noteworthy but not to the extent that it would make my stomach knot.

Written by **Tricia Purcell**

Portman portrays the tormented dancer, Nina, whose whole life is striving for perfection. When she finally achieves the prima ballerina position in Swan Lake, we see her life turning upside down. The arrival of a new dancer, Lily, causes her serious paranoia and then the fine line between reality and fiction becomes quite confusing for the audience. The trials and tribulations of her life and mind become so intertwined, the viewers can't help but be intrigued.

The technicality of the dancing and intensity that Portman brings to the role foreshadows any need for a script or strong dialogues in the movie. Similar to The Wrestler, also directed by Darren Aronofsky, it is the power of the acting that draws the viewer into a whole other world. Like Mickey Rourke's body in Aronofsky's earlier movie, Portman's physique was something to

be astounded by. Her months of training showed off and reflected her dedication to the role and what it entailed. I think that the fact Portman's next movie will be the romantic comedy, 'No Strings Attached' (with Ashton Kutcher), shows not only the range in her performances but her need to take on a much less intense film than Black Swan.

Surprisingly, there was nothing gratuitous about the sex scenes either which is always a bonus! Instead, they added to the passion of the dancing and the development of Nina's personality. I would definitely recommend this movie, which is never something I do lightly, but I warn, it is not for the faint of heart. Yes, you will be moved, and you will not forget this movie for a long time. Prepare to become a Balletomane! (Fan of the ballet).

KEYWEST, BANNA MÓR AN TODHCHAÍ

Scríobhta ag **Féilim Ó Flatharta**

IAD de Kings of Leon, U2 agus Snow Patrol, sin atá ráite faoin banna ceoil nua Keywest. Níl siad ach bliain nó dhó ar an mbóthar agus cheana féin tá albam beo taifeadta acu thall i Los Angeles.

Tá cúigear sa mbanna ceoil, beirt as Sasana agus triúr as Baile Átha Cliath. Casann siad ceol dá gcuid féin chomh maith le covers. Tá a ceoil féin go maith ach tá na covers go hiontach ar fad. Tá an ceol suaithinseach, cuireann sé meascán don Script agus Mumford and Sons i gcuimhne dhom. Chuala mé féin go pearsanta iad ar Sráid na Siopaí i nGaillimh ag casadh Firework le Katy Perry agus bhí siad an fheabhas.

Ní hamháin gur ceoltóirí maith iad ach is daoine álainn iad chomh maith. Ní raibh aon fadhb acu labhairt le daoine agus rudaí a shíniú dóibh. Seo tréith an-tábhachtach do bhanna ceoil ar bith atá ag iarraidh cáil mhór a bhaint amach dóibh féin. Gealaim duit nach mbeidh díomá ort má théann tú ag ceolchoirm leo. Bionn go leor gigs acu i nGaillimh. Tá dhá album amuigh acu faoi láthair agus tá suíomh idirlín acu www.keywestofficial.com. Seo ceann de bannaí mór an todhchaí agus ní bheidh aon iontas orm iad a fheiceáil ag casadh i bpáirc an Chrócaigh faoi cheann cúpla bliain.

#DOLANS february

Thurs 10th	STREETLIFE PRESENTS MR SCRUFF	10 €12.50
Thurs 10th	JOY KILLS SORROW	8pm €12
Fri 11th	HOWARD MARKS	8pm €15
Fri 11th	MASTER AND DOG <small>FORMERLY JOHN, SHELLY & THE CREATURES</small>	8pm €8
Thurs 17th	SIMON FAGAN	8pm €12
Fri 18th	LIMERICK LIVE FOR LIFE BPLO, FUNK JUNKIES, SENECA & MOLEY	8pm €7
Sat 19th	DECLAN O'ROURKE	8pm €18
Sat 19th	MACRONITE	10pm €10
Sun 20th	<small>ALL AGES</small> TESSERACT	5pm €10

coming soon: goitse & cara, ryan sheridan, protobaby, david o'doherty, ryan sheridan, rubberbandits, halves, RSAG..

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METAL MASTERS TO PLAY DOLANS WAREHOUSE

Written by **Billy Cussen**

PROGRESSIVE Metal masters Tesseract will perform in Dolan's Warehouse on 20 February, the final date of their first Irish tour. They will be supported by Dublin based band "Hero in Error", Limerick based band "Censura" and Ennis band "Sins of the world". This show will undoubtedly prove that the Irish metal scene is alive and kicking.

Since their formation in Spring 2007, Tesseract have received huge praise from peers such as Meshuggah and from the media (including Metal Hammer magazine) for their effortless ability to deliver atmospheric, metallic songs that stir strong emotions and evoke powerful mental images, while avoiding the pomp, over-indulgence and pretentiousness often associated with the genre. With the recent addition of vocalist Dan Tompkins brings a huge vocal range and further melodic element to Tesseract's ambitious, other worldly sound. The band recently signed a worldwide contract with Century Media Records and is expected to release their debut album

"One" in March. Dublin based tech metallers Hero in Error are definitely another force to be reckoned with. Despite their musical career being in its infancy, their hardworking attitude and breath taking live show has made them a much talked about prospect, helping them to rack up some impressive support slots alongside the likes of metal giants Mastodon and UK based band Architects. Extremely positive reviews of their latest EP "The High Point of New Lows" along with recent interviews with Kerrang magazine show that they are truly ones to watch in the coming months. Limericks Censura have a strong reputation for flawless live performances and solid

studio recordings. Recent line up changes has proven to enhance the bands creativity and add a new level of intensity to their live shows. They are scheduled to record a follow up EP to 2009's "Split Insanity" this summer in Los Angeles with producer Charles "Kallaghan" Massabo. Censura continue to gig in support of "Split Insanity" all the while constantly expanding their fanbase.

Tesseract: tesseractband.co.uk,
Hero in Error: facebook.com/HEROINERROR, Censura:
facebook.com/censuraireland



THE MOST CENSORED FILM IN 16 YEARS

Written by **Keith Beegan**

IF Hostel or Saw disturbed you, then A Serbian Film is cinematic arsenic! Indeed, the Srdjan Spasojevic directed psychological horror is not for the squeamish. Laden with scenes of paedophilia, necrophilia and the less explicit 'viewer friendly' rape sequences, A Serbian Film catapults the subgenre of gore porn to a whole new level. Although the movie is subtitled, which may discourage some viewers; you are bound to be so engrossed within ten minutes that you'll forget you can't understand the dialogue.

The semi-retired Serbian porn star Milos (played by Srdan Todorovic), renowned for his legendary ability to sustain an erection for hours without visual stimuli, offers his talents to a perceived 'art film' with the aim of banking one final pay-check to secure his family's financial future. As you might guess, all is not what it seems. Milos is taken to the unlikely set of an orphanage, and instructed to perform in a series of sexual situations. Although he refuses to continue, having been forced to have sex with a physically-abused woman in front of a young girl dressed as Alice in Wonderland, he continues reluctantly. As the plot of the

supposed art-film deepens, the scenes become more graphic, culminating in a less than light-hearted climax.

Although the film isn't set for official release until 11 June in Serbia and 10 December in the UK, the movie has a cult following over the internet, and is being received both positively and negatively at film festivals. Many critics find the graphic depictions of sadomasochism gratuitous, particularly scenes of new-born porn and eye-socket sodomy, while others find they compliment the layers of psychological torture and the elaborate hallucinations of the protagonist. Interestingly enough, the movie is being investigated by the state prosecution of Serbia for violations of law on the grounds of sexual morality and crime related to the protection of minors. So close the curtains, pump up the volume, heat the popcorn and have a quiet night in! But be warned, the movie will have you jerking back and forth out of laughter or sheer disgust so bring a paper-bag for motion-sickness!

EXCITEMENT ABOUND IN THE WORLD OF HIP-HOP

Written by **Gary Whelan**

AFTER a soulless period in the middle of "the Noughties", Hip Hop is returning to a level of quality and substance which we have not seen in years. Not long ago, it wasn't just music. It was a movement; a voice of a generation.

Gone now (and hopefully forever) are the likes of Florida, Soulja Boy, Gucci Mane and Pitbull to name a few. Commercial cash cows and proud of it, making money for themselves and their executives was paramount. They simultaneously lost the respect of genuine music fans with every release.

Despite recent years of disgrace, there is a new generation of rapper coming through. Beautiful music is once again being made by artists such as CunninLynguists, J. Cole, Jay Electronica, Black Milk, Wiz Kalifa, Dom Kennedy, Nipsey Hussle, Hayes, Buff 1, Freddie Gibbs, Yelawolf, Reflection Eternal and One Be Lo.

Yes, it's a long list and only a number of those making a buzz amongst the rap faithful at the moment.

There's a shift happening in the Hip Hop world. Even the bigger labels are listening. The first noteworthy artists to sign with Jay Z-owned RocNation Records were J. Cole and Jay Electronica. Such a buzz online and on the street hasn't been seen since we met 50 Cent. Both are scheduled to release debut albums in 2011. And both exhibit a 90s vibe, that so called "Golden Age" of Hip Hop.

Eminem has also kept his ear to the underground, with his Shady Records label. He recently announced the signing of Slaughterhouse, a group comprised of Joe Budden, Crooked I, Royce da 5'9" and Joell Ortiz. All members are well

respected on the underground scene as solo artists for their lyrical content and delivery. Another notable signing for Shady is that of Yelawolf, a white rapper from Alabama who has blown up online with his mixtape Trunk Musik. After a fantastic introduction to the world on the B.E.T awards, it was plain to see for everybody that this "whiteboy" deserves his spot with some slick delivery.

Although record sales will never be at the level they once were because of the rise in illegal downloading, 2011 is shaping up to be one of the most productive in terms of quality that we have seen in 10 years and man is it exciting to see the music that I love and constantly defend return to its rightful place as the voice of the genuine music fan.



Photo By Jens Nordström.

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ROAD SAFETY WEEK

2011

<u>WHAT?</u>	<u>WHEN?</u>	<u>WHERE?</u>
RSA ROAD SAFETY SHUTTLE PRACTICE YOUR DRIVING SKILLS ON OUR SIMULATORS, ENJOY A FULLY INTERACTIVE ROAD SAFETY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE, TEST YOUR HAZARD PERCEPTION SKILLS AND EVEN TEST YOUR BRAKE REACTION TIME.	ALL WEEK	PLAZA
LIFESAVER PROJECT A LIVE DEMONSTRATION OF HOW THE EMERGENCY SERVICES REACT TO A ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENT. NOT TO BE MISSED.	THURSDAY, 12.30	PLAZA
ROAD SAFETY TALK A VERY INFORMATIVE TALK ON ROAD SAFETY, DRINK DRIVING, DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN.	THURSDAY, 1 P.M.	JEAN MONNET
ROAD SAFETY	ALL THE TIME	EVERYWHERE

CHECK OUT FACEBOOK, POSTERS, LEAFLETS AND INFOSCREENS FOR ULSU EVENTS.

Student Speak

HELLO CONSTANT READER!

Are you in this issue of Student Speak?



Last week, intrepid reporter Nick Kennedy risked life and limb to bring you the views of the campus.

So guys, if you could write a headline in An Focal, what would it be?

Anne O'Sullivan, Hannah Borland, Ali Kearney, Lorraine Ronan
"Female engineering students happy with Torres move."



Lindsay Curran
"Art History is worth it."



Tom Horan
"Witty journalist struggles to find headline."



Dave Molamphy
"UL business student caught in bed with Limerick mermaid."



Audra Runde
"Dollar killing Euro in stockmarkets."



Jenna Siedow and Brianna Denk
"American students looking forward to Super Bowl in Ireland."



Niall Barry
"MMPT asks who is Mariyello?"



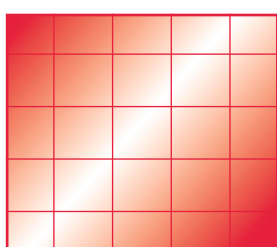
Kenneth Quirke and John Linnane
"Fek the FYP! Take me out instead. Great night in the Hurlers."



Ger Gannon
"Free roll with every paper."



Marco Adagio and Eoin O'Grady
"Rumours confirmed: 'Backdoor Lovers' to play Charity Week."



The Grid

Exclusive communication for Clubs and Societies.

Attention C&S PROs! Send content for The Grid to ceditor@live.ie only before Friday, 11 February 2011 to benefit from your space in the next issue of An Focal.

<h2>Clubs</h2>	<p>Handball No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Rowing No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<h2>Societies</h2>	<p>Drama Drama Society Production: Love is Merely a Madness- Monday, 14 February in the Jonathan Swift Theatre (B1023-Beside Red Raisins), 7pm. €2 at the door.</p>
<h2>Do you think The Grid is a useful tool for your Club or Society?</h2> <p>Email: sucommunications@ul.ie</p>		<p>Sailing No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Anime and Manga No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>International Week 3: Mentor Dinners, Study Club, Book Club & Sports. Check www.ulinternationalsociety.com for more details. Week 4: Friday - Traffic Light Party: The Stables 9pm. Trip to Glendalough with OPC.</p>
		<p>Skydive No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Architecture No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Law No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>
<p>Athletics No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Kayak ULKC, the holders of the title, are taking part in the Irish Intervarsities on the 18-20 Feb! All members are encouraged to participate! For more information: www.ulkayak.com.</p>	<p>Soccer Training continues on Monday to Wednesday as normal. Check website for further details and match fixtures and reports. http://ulsoccerclub.webs.com/apps/blog/. Any queries, please contact us at ulsoccerclub.mail@gmail.com.</p>	<p>Christian Union No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Medical No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>
<p>Badminton Last month, nine members successfully attended the newly created Galway Student Badminton Tournament (GSBT). We won one men's singles title (top category) and one ladies doubles title (club standard category).</p>	<p>Krav Maga No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Softball No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Computer No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Music Open Mics every Monday in Stables at 9pm. Meetings every Wednesday 8pm to 9pm in the SU. Gig in Baker Place Thursday, 10 February, come one, come all!</p>
<p>Basketball No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Ladies Hockey No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Sub Aqua No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Poker Tournaments Mondays in the Sports Bar. Check the UL Poker Soc Facebook page for more details.</p>	<p>Debating Union Galway IV, 12 and 13 February</p>
<p>Boarders No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Ladies Rugby Training Mondays 6:30, Wednesdays 6:15 in Annacotty. Lifts from East Gate car park at 5:55pm Mondays and 5:45pm Wednesdays. Next home match Wednesday Week 6 vs. UCC. KO 3pm. Email ulladiesrugby@hotmail.com.</p>	<p>Tae Kwon Do Training Times PESS Building. Monday 6:50pm; Wednesday 9pm; Thursday 6:50pm.</p>	 <p>FREE DRIVING LESSONS?</p> <p>CALL NOW FOR DETAILS!</p> <p>Tel: 061 - 490 900 / 087 - 692 4241</p> <p>Email: cian@free-bee.ie Web: www.free-bee.ie</p>  <p>LOCATED @ O'MARA MOTORS ON THE TIPPERARY ROAD</p>	
<p>Capoeira No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Men's Rugby No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Tennis No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>		
<p>Chess No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Mountain Bike No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Trampoline No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>		
<p>Dance UL No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Outdoor Pursuits (OPC) Welcome to all new and old members. The climbing wall in the PESS building is now open. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 7pm until 10pm. First weekend trip: Glendalough 18 and 20 February.</p>	<p>Ultimate Frisbee No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>		
<p>Fencing No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Parkour New training time: Monday 9pm to 10.30pm, Tuesday 9.15pm to 10.30pm in the PESS Gym. Parkour Fundraiser at the Stables Late Bar, 17 February. Get your tickets!</p>	<p>UL Ninjas Training at 6:15pm Tuesdays and Thursdays on Maguire's Pitch, and 6pm Wednesdays in the PESS. We travel to UCC on 5 to 6 March to defend our Development IV title. www.ulninjas.com for info.</p>		
<p>GAA No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Pool & Darts No submissions received. Visit registerscs.ul.ie.</p>	<p>Windsurfing Just back from our successful trip to Dahab, Egypt. Our first trip this semester will be 25 to 27 February. We welcome members old and new!</p>		

INTERNATIONAL WEEK BRINGS NEW FLAVOUR TO UL

Written by **David Studer, UL International Society PRO**

LAST week UL International Society celebrated International Week running from Monday, 31 January to Thursday, 3 February. The main aim of holding International Week so early in the semester was part of the Society's aim of encouraging new international students to get involved as much as possible as early as possible and to get the most out of their time in UL.

International Week began with a free screening of Agnes Brown in the Jonathan Swift Theatre followed by a few drinks in the Scholars Bar.

On Tuesday the Stables was the venue for the International Food Fair, brought back from its two year hiatus with free cuisine to be sampled from around the globe. Credit must go to

all those international students from Brazil, Sweden, Norway, Spain, the Basque Country, Germany, Austria, China, Japan, Ireland, USA, Lithuania, Hungary and France amongst others for preparing a feast that would leave the most cultured palette drooling for more.

Wednesday saw the International Office hosting a coffee morning for all the new International Students in An Teach Fáilte for a relaxed meet and greet. That night the Lodge hosted a Spanish music night – a bit of a cultural shock to regulars more used to the Bay Watch than Reggaeton!

On Thursday the Eden Restaurant marked the Chinese New Year (Year of the Rabbit) by serving up a

Chinese dish for lunch. The inaugural International Society Ball took place on Thursday night. The ball had a James Bond theme with UL Fashion Society judging a competition for best costume/lookalike. Tickets were €5 and all monies raised go to the MSF Haiti Appeal. Entertainment was provided by the DJ Soc and Music Soc with a selection of classic Bond tunes. The ball had a great mix of Bond villains, Bond girls and a few too many over confident 007s after the Martinis had run dry! Celebrations continued long into the night and were a fitting end to a great week for UL International Society.



“We hiked two hours through snow and fog.”



No better time to take your clothes off. OPC members freeze in publicity stunt.

OPC VISIT A VERY CHILLY SCOTLAND

Written by **Kelsey Hutton**

Written by **Tomás Walsh**

WHEN the OPC presented me with the opportunity to travel to Scotland for a bit of mountaineering, so many things were against me; funds, moving out of my apartment, and missing classes back home but going was the best decision I've ever made. I have no bad memories from the day we began the journey until the moment we left.

Living in a tiny, dirty bunkhouse and climbing mountains with such a diverse group demonstrated how people can work together at their best. Without everyone's help and my own determination I would have never accomplished what I did. Every view was breath taking and every effort was worth it no matter how hard. From the first day of training, getting soaked, to the summit of Nevis on the most beautiful day for years, I learned so much I couldn't have learned anywhere else with anyone else.

I will never again underestimate the power of encouragement or doubt my abilities. I will never forget a single second of Scotland.

WITH Ben Nevis still in their legs, five weary climbers braved one last early morning to climb Stob Coire nan Lochan. We hiked two hours through the snow and fog to the base of Dorsal Arete, a 150m climb up a fin like ridge and for many members of the group our first lead climb.

We split into two groups, each member having the opportunity to lead and place their own gear. At the daunting crux of the climb one must tip toe out on a slender ledge and scale a column of rock with not much in the way of hand holds and a shear drop on either side. After scaling this, it was a short walk to the summit of Stob Coire nan Lochan, 1115m. Our decent was made easy by a 200m slide down Broad Gully, racing the setting sun and the day was rounded off with haggis, whisky and ale.

The supervisor will tell you what we have coming up this semester, where we will be going and our amazing International trips. We also wish a fond farewell to Stina Borjesson and Kelsey Hutton, we'll miss ye.

DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY CONTINUES TO BLOSSOM THIS SPRING

Written by **Lina Mickel, Development Society PRO**

INFORMATIVE talks, a successful table quiz and a rise in members: DevSoc looks back on the last semester with satisfaction as it makes its mark in the realm of societies. Highlights included a talk on the devastating flood situation in Pakistan held by UL lecturer Dr. Swati Parashar and Concern desk officer Catherine Dunning. Other events last semester included their Human Rights working group activities for World Aids Day and Human Rights Day in December, as well as introductory presentations by the NGOs Gluaiseacht and the

Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Although we are only in Week 3, the DevSoc committee is in the middle of planning their next main event: a charity concert for the flood victims in Pakistan. All are welcome to come along on 15 March to The Stables for a great night in aid of a good cause.

The society, along with Concern, will organise local bands for a night of music and entertainment that nobody should miss. Feel free to checkout our Facebook page and our website www.devsoc.weebly.com for updates and other information.

Charity Concert for flood victims in Pakistan.
15 March at The Stables Club.



Sampling in the Stables: The International Food Fair saw lots of you try food from all over the world.

KAYAKERS VISIT WALES



Conor Bredin on the river Aberglacie. Image: Kayak Club

Written by **Podge Mooney,**
ULKC PRO

2011 HAS begun excellently once again for the UL Kayak Club! Well, apart from the car breakdown on the way to the ferry to Wales. ULKC travelled across the Irish Sea on 16 January to catch some Welsh rivers in north Wales. We went on to the Cardiff International White Water Centre at the end of the week. Some of our first year paddlers got their first international experience of white-water. Plenty of older kayakers gained more experience too. Despite the Big Freeze, we were lucky with the water levels after disappointment last year when snow hampered our plans.

We got in about six different runs, some advanced, in north Wales. We paddled sections on the river Aberglacie and the river Trywernyn. The river Trywernyn was running at fairly high levels, but overall the levels were great.

There was something for everyone on the trip, and our first years preformed outstandingly.

One of the highlights was our visit to the International White Water Centre in the Welsh capital, Cardiff, a first for the club. It won't be the last! The centre is a man-made white-water course with tons of artificial water pumped. Uniquely, and very handily, there is an escalator at the bottom of the run to bring you back up to the top again. You'd never have to leave your kayak.

After two days in Cardiff, we packed up and left for home. When we arrived in Limerick at 11am the following day, wrecked and definitely not in the mood for college!

LADIES RUGBY TRAINING CAMP A HUGE SUCCESS

Written by **Kelly O'Dwyre**

FORGET the idea of easing back into fitness after the Christmas holidays; Coach Anthony Flynn and Captain Fiona Reidy had different plans for the UL Ladies Rugby team this January. The plan: a tough two-day training camp in Clonea, Co Waterford. The destination and nature of this training camp were kept top secret up until the last minute – we were just promised that it would be “heaps of fun and very beneficial”.

The agenda turned out to contain physical, yet fun activities– including a trip to a military-style adventure centre, a beach training session, recovery in the sea and the pool, bowling, team bonding, rugby training sessions etc. it wasn't all work and no play; ULLR

members always manage to bring fun into all we do. For instance, some of the more seasoned players had a recovery session of their own by running riot in the children's jungle gym in the hotel!

Charades and bowling were also among the highlights, and certain members had gutter balls more times than they would care to remember!

With the physical strength of most members of the scrum on one side of the Tug of War it's no wonder team A won that particular challenge. The beach training session was eased by the support and encouragement from fellow teammates, and our teamwork skills were tested during the military-style obstacle course. It was necessary at times to carry our teammates over

barriers! On the second day, a full day team training session was held in Dungarvan RFC. This was to enable the team to get their first touch of the ball and iron out rookie mistakes before regular ULLR training started in Week 1. With a match against NUIG looming before us, we were all relieved to get this opportunity.

After this training session it was time for us all to go home. Although most of us felt like puking up all our Christmas indulgences during this training camp, I speak for all the members who attended when I say we were sad to leave. Thanks to ULLR for organizing such a great trip!

MUSIC SOC DISCOVERS SOME KIND OF MUSIC PARADISE

Written by **Darragh Gleeson**

'SUP fellow students! Music Soc is back after a six week long Christmas hibernation, and we've got some good news! Rather miraculously, we brought all the people who went to Glasgow back to Limerick. We had an unbelievable trip and you can't turn a corner in Glasgow without seeing buskers, music shops, recording studios etc. Glasgow is some kind of musician's paradise!

This semester we are still running Open Mics in the Stables on Monday nights, there is a guitar and P.A supplied. So all are welcome to show off their talents! Our meetings are

still on Wednesdays 8pm, where we will run through upcoming events, brainstorming ideas. New members are always welcome so tell your friends. We have a band night coming up on Thursday, Week 3 in Baker Place with Time Is A Thief headlining. If your band is interested in playing we will have a sign up sheet on the music room door in the SU! We hope to see you over the coming semester. Stay tuned, from your friendly neighbourhood Music Soc!



UL Ladies' Rugby

MED SOC ANNOUNCES FOURTH ANNUAL BALL

Written by **Annie Dillon**

THE UL Graduate Medical School and associated disciplines will host its annual “Med Ball” on Saturday, 5 February. The Ball, which is a charity black tie event, is now in its fourth year and promises to be a very entertaining night for all.

Proceeds from the Ball will go to a Paediatric Oncology fund at the Midwestern Regional Hospital. The

event is expected to draw around 400 guests including medical school students, faculty and staff, consultants, physicians, local personalities and a number of students from related disciplines of the Health Sciences.

In a release issued to An Focal, UL Med Soc said “As UL's Medical School is still very much in its infancy, [our committee] along with the co-operation

of the students and staff of the Medical School are constantly doing our very best to build and improve the profile, image and reputation of the School.”

Student photographers are welcome to cover the event and should contact alan@ulmedsoc.com for more information.



Metal God Shane Tighe samples a keyboard. Image: Music Soc

Interview

LIFE, CRAIC AND MARI'S

Written by Finn McDuffie, Editor

WELCOME to Mari's Cheese Shop! You probably won't leave without trying something new, you might have a chance encounter and you'll definitely walk away smiling to yourself. Mari's is truly wonderful. Located in Limerick's Milk Market and described by patrons as "rustic" and "community spirited" and dubbed "the only truly Irish café in Ireland," it's quite clear there's something very unique going on here.

So what is it? Well, from what I can tell, it's Mari. She has shaped her business around liveliness, fun and a joie de vivre that's really quite endearing and wholly infectious. Her charisma is fused with a love of music and humanity; something which has branded itself in every aspect of her café cheese shop.

The shop usually has live music on Saturdays and Mari regards it as "the best traditional music and jazz around."

"We don't play the radio or CDs. Only live music from great musicians," she says. "We know everyone and we've been around a long time. My brother

was a traditional musician and when he died from suicide, ten years ago, we brought in the music in memory of him."

"I like good music," she says. "And it is good music I have here. And varied."

This variety is tough to come by and Mari has a sharp and characteristically unexpected way of getting it. "I never have the same people," she smiles. "I leave the musicians hang. I don't even tell them when they're playing so that they're surprised and delighted to be here. You have to manage them and make them thrilled to be here. But I pay artists really well. Very well. And they love that."

And Mari loves artists. Beautiful artworks by local painters hang on the stone walls of her shop, patiently awaiting the wistful eyes of an owner. There are several glowing candles on the table behind us and a delicious smell of fresh coffee fills the air. It's bright. There's lots of light getting in. And there's plenty of cheese too, of course.

In 1992, after some time spent sewing curtains, Mari decided on a change of career. But why cheese?

"I'm a cheese woman really. We didn't start by selling cheese, we were a coffee shop. But cheese came down by mistake in an order one time and I started selling cheese then. That's how it began," she says, laughing "Were you born then?"

Lately though, the Milk Market has undergone a radical transformation, which many welcomed. But caught up in the new and "now", few may have considered the loss sustained by the Market with the construction of its new, all-weather canopy.

"Before the roof, it was better. The roof has been a bit of a distraction to me. I used to have the music in the market and now I can't put it there because they put a stall where my people used to sit and the musicians used to play. Now the music's indoors and I'm still trying to figure out whether the music is better outside or inside," she says. "I did not want that huge piece of plastic

up there. I really didn't." Mari was the only person in Limerick who formally objected to the construction of the canopy. And she defends her position well.

"Now, I'm normally joking but I'm serious now. For me, it's almost spiritual. The market is the direct opposite to ALDI or LIDL. There, the aisles are set so people move. It's access and movement. Shop! Fast! Pay! Get out!," she says.

"The market should be based on people meeting in the open air in the rain or the wind and talking and hugging and kissing and delighted, looking cool and looking stupid and looking fat and looking thin and having a great time. People you haven't met for 20 years. And that's exactly what Limerick was. It's a 400 year old tradition of just meeting. It was a real people thing. No musak, no aisles, no lanes, no fast movement or fast forward."

Despite her grievances, Mari continues to have fun. "The market here is the best kept secret in the country," she

says. "It's amazing. It's miles better than English market."

"This is a once off event. Bang! Five hours. People make a living. They grow their veg, they sell it. And it's all local." Though the Market has adopted some of the ALDI formula, it's still fun, especially at Mari's. She also promises to keep the management in check. "I'm doing my little bit," she laughs. "I'm irking the management every week I do something bold."

Talking to Mari, I noticed there was a lot of laughter. It was her, it was her shop, it was the people who came in during the interview and the fun and the messing around. There is a real humanity there. And bundles of personality.

"This place is a great secret," she says. "It's the best in the country, by a mile."

"Though, a few tourists have found us lately," she laughs and winks with a smile. "I'm not mad about tourists. I don't like them at all actually."



Mari and Carol standing outside Mari's Cheese Shop at the Milk Market on a Friday in January.

"Talking to Mari, I noticed there was a lot of laughter. It was her, it was her shop, it was the people who came in during the interview and the fun and the messing around. There is a real humanity there."

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